

Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6225

House Foreign Affairs Committee
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Senate Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

House Committee on the Judiciary
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6216

April 1, 2025

Dear Chairman Risch, Mast, Grassley and Jordan and Ranking Members Shaheen, Meeks, Durbin and Raskin:

We, the undersigned, are writing to bring to your urgent attention the perilous plight of journalists who have worked for the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM)-funded entities, such as Voice of America (VOA), Radio Free Asia (RFA), and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL). These journalists, both in the United States and abroad, are at grave risk of harassment, threats, and even imprisonment due to their association with these independent media outlets, and we are writing for your assistance to ensure they are protected.

The stakes could not be higher. Many of the journalists who have worked for these US-government-funded news organizations reported on politically sensitive issues in their home countries from the United States because it was unsafe for them to do so back home; with the defunding of USAGM, they now face an uncertain future, grappling with the loss of work status as well as prolonged delays in immigration processes. Others remain trapped in countries where their association with USAGM-funded entities makes them targets of state repression. Recent reporting and advocacy, including a [joint letter](#) by 28 free expression and press freedom organizations, have highlighted the dire consequences of inaction.

Because this delay will undoubtedly impact journalists and contributors in the US, we note with deep concern the announcement from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) pausing the green card application process for certain refugees and asylum seekers.

We urge Congress to act:

- Urge the State Department to assign the necessary resources to secure the release of the eleven USAGM-funded staff members currently imprisoned, so that they are not abandoned to their fate.
- Contact United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) urging them to expedite and prioritize immigration applications or protective measures for these

journalists who have worked with USAGM-funded outlets, and urge the USCIS and Department of State to push for a suspension of the 30/60 day period after furlough/termination at the end of which journalists' right to stay in the US ends.

- Urgently schedule a hearing highlighting the plight of these journalists who have bravely reported for US-government-funded news organizations on issues in their country of origin and now face deportation due to their loss of employment. The hearing should explore avenues to ensure no journalist working for any media outlet associated with USAGM is deported or forced to return to a country where they risk persecution.
- Address via legislation the precarious legal status of these journalists, which has been jeopardized by the effective shut down of USAGM-funded entities.
- Urgently request DHS to resume its processing of green card applications for refugees and asylum seekers.

Journalists sent back to their countries of origin are likely to face extreme consequences, including being imprisoned. Among the countries and territories where journalists are particularly at risk are Belarus, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Vietnam. We are aware that at least fifteen journalists from Radio Free Asia and eight from Voice of America face serious risk of being immediately arrested upon arrival, while another 84 from both media outlets are at risk of other adverse consequences.

In the past, USAGM-funded journalists and contributors have faced serious danger to keep the public informed. Currently, eleven USAGM-funded staffers are imprisoned across the globe: five in Vietnam, two by Russia, one in Belarus, one in Azerbaijan, and two in Myanmar. Some have received particularly harsh sentences, such as Vietnamese journalist Truong Duy Nhat, [sentenced](#) to 10 years in prison in 2020, and Pham Chi Dung [sentenced](#) to a 15-year prison sentence in 2021.

Journalists who have bravely reported under the banner of USAGM-funded outlets are essential to reporting on the facts, exposing corruption, and providing information to citizens of countries that are actively suppressing access to independent media. These platforms provide an opportunity to share commentary and perspectives, bringing underreported stories to the world. Ensuring journalists' safety is a moral imperative but it also sends a strong signal about the United States' resolve to defend the principles of democracy and free expression.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. Please let me know if we can provide further information or assistance in this regard.

Signed by:

- 1. PEN America**
- 2. Reporters Without Borders (RSF)**
- 3. Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)**

4. **Aegis Safety Alliance**
5. **Article 19**
6. **Association of Foreign Press Correspondents**
7. **BlueLena**
8. **China Against the Death Penalty**
9. **Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation**
10. **Croatian PEN**
11. **English PEN**
12. **First Amendment Foundation**
13. **Freedom of the Press Foundation**
14. **Human Rights in China (HRIC)**
15. **International Press Institute**
16. **International Tibet Network**
17. **International Women's Media Foundation**
18. **Irish PEN/PEN na hÉireann**
19. **Legal Initiatives for Vietnam (LIV)**
20. **No Business with Genocide**
21. **PEN Canada**
22. **PEN Esperanto**
23. **PEN International**
24. **PEN International Women Writers Committee**
25. **PEN Sweden**
26. **Radio Television Digital News Association**
27. **Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press**
28. **Students for a Free Tibet**
29. **Students for Falun Gong**
30. **The Press Freedom Center at the National Press Club**
31. **The Trust Project**
32. **Tibet Action Institute**
33. **URL Media**
34. **Uyghur Human Rights Project**
35. **Vietnamese Abroad PEN Centre**
36. **Wallace House Center for Journalists**
37. **Washingtonians Supporting Hong Kong (DC4HK)**