



United States Mission to the OSCE

Broadcasting in Azerbaijan

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The United States regrets Azerbaijan's decision not to renew the broadcasting licenses of Radio Liberty, Voice of America and the BBC. Radio Liberty, Voice of America and the BBC are essential to the right "to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers" as noted in the OSCE Copenhagen Document to which Azerbaijan committed itself. We agree fully with the OSCE's Representative on Freedom of the Media, Miklos Haraszti, who in a December 30 press release noted that "closing down FM news radio broadcasts that were among the few remaining sources of varied, public-service quality information is a serious step back for an OSCE democracy."

On December 30, the spokesman of the Department of State issued the following press release:

"We deeply regret Azerbaijan's decision not to renew the broadcasting licenses of Radio Liberty, Voice of America and the BBC. These media organizations play a crucial role in supporting democratic debate and the free exchange of ideas and information. This decision, if carried out, will represent a serious setback to freedom of speech, and retard democratic reform in Azerbaijan.

We remain committed to working with the government of Azerbaijan to find the proper legal framework within which these radio and TV broadcasts can continue."