
The Internet, the only possible route for uncensored information to enter the country, is also tightly controlled—access to all opposition and critical news websites and blogs is blocked. The government applies sophisticated filtering technology to control the flow of information via the Internet.



UZBEKISTAN

In 2009, Uzbekistan remained on the oppressive political course it chose after the notorious 2005 Andijan massacre, with conditions for the mass media continuing to deteriorate. Despite pressure from the international community, the Uzbek government is cracking down on foreign media, local journalists, civil society, and independent political groups. Even though the government claims to respect human rights, plurality of opinions, and freedom of speech, any attempts to obtain objective information about developments in the country are fraught with obstacles.

Uzbekistan has no independent media. All broadcast and print media are controlled tightly by the government. Constitutionally, there is a ban on censorship, but in reality, censorship is very intense. Following several show-trials of editors and journalists, editors have learned to censor materials as a matter of survival. Editors approve only information uncritical of the government. The Internet, the only possible route for uncensored information to enter the country, is also tightly controlled—access to all opposition and critical news websites and blogs is blocked. The government applies sophisticated filtering technology to control the flow of information via the Internet.

The government is continuing its crackdown on local journalists that intensified after the Andijan events. Many independent journalists and rights activists have been jailed, and often are portrayed in local media as national enemies. In 2009, Uzbekistan had three major cases of oppression of journalists. On February 22, 2009, Dilmurod Saiid was charged with extortion; a local woman testified that Saiid forced her to extort money from another journalist. Saiid was found guilty and sentenced to 12-and-a-half years in prison. Another journalist, Kushodbek Usmon, was reportedly detained on February 23, 2009. Usmon was arrested on suspicion of hooliganism, but later was charged with libel and “affront.” Finally, Umida Akhmedova, a prominent journalist, photographer, and documentary filmmaker (she directed the controversial documentary *Burden of Virginity*), was arrested on January 13, 2009. She was criminally charged with insulting and libeling the Uzbek people through her work.

International human rights organizations criticized the EU decision this past year to lift the last, but the most potent, of the series of sanctions imposed on Uzbekistan in the wake of the Andijan events, when the state refused an international investigation into the incident. As the Uzbek environment for human rights and freedom of speech has not changed significantly since then, Freedom House called this EU decision “a grave mistake,”¹ and warned that it sends the wrong message about the EU’s commitment to principles of human rights.

¹Freedom House: Lifting of EU Arms Embargo on Uzbekistan Sends Wrong Message on Human Rights http://www.freedomhouse.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=299:lifting-of-eu-arms-embargo-on-uzbekistan-sends-wrong-message-on-human-rights&catid=35&Itemid=124

UZBEKISTAN AT A GLANCE

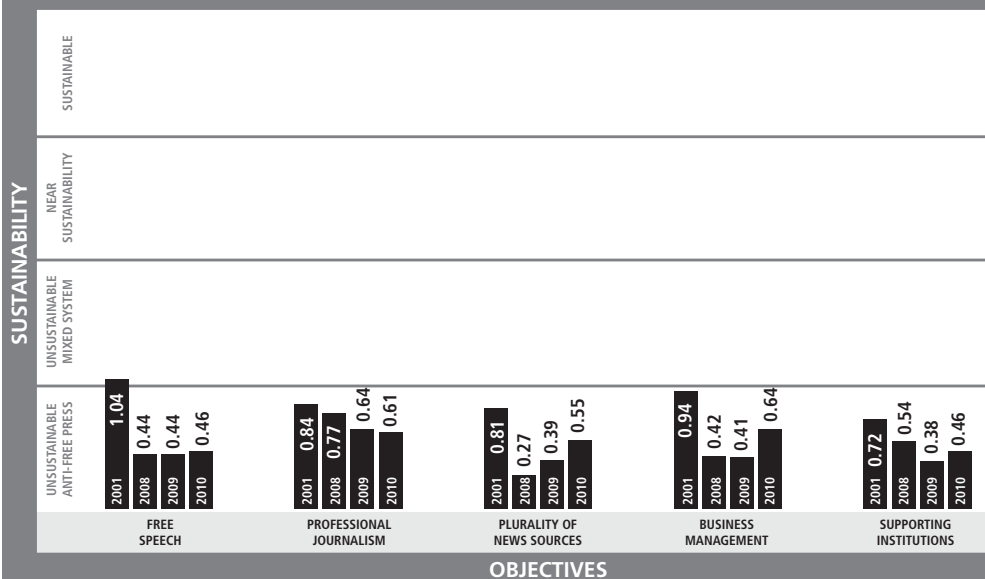
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 27,606,007 (July 2009 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Tashkent
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Uzbek 80%, Russian 5.5%, Tajik 5%, Kazakh 3%, Karakalpak 2.5%, Tatar 1.5%, other 2.5% (1996 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Muslim 88% (mostly Sunnis), Eastern Orthodox 9%, other 3% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** Uzbek 74.3%, Russian 14.2%, Tajik 4.4%, other 7.1% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2008-Atlas):** \$24.74 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2009)
- > **GNI per capita (2008-PPP):** \$2,660 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2009)
- > **Literacy rate:** 99.3% (male 99.6%, female 99%) (2003 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Islam Karimov (since March 24, 1990)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:**
Print: 663 newspapers, 195 magazines, 13 periodical bulletins;
Radio stations: 35; Television stations: 53 (Uzbek government)
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** Total newspaper readership is estimated at only 50,000; top publications include *Khalq So'zi* (state-run daily), *Narodnye Slovo* (state-run, Russian language daily), *Ozbekistan Ozovi* (published by ruling party) (Library of Congress, Federal Research Division)
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** Uzbekistan National News Agency (state-owned), Jahon, Turkiston Press
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 2,469,000 million (2008 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: UZBEKISTAN



Annual scores for 2002 through 2006/2007 are available online at http://www.irex.org/programs/MSI_EUR/archive.asp

Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1):

Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2):

Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism, and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability.

Near Sustainability (2-3):

Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable.

Sustainable (3-4):

Country has media that are considered generally professional, free, and sustainable, or to be approaching these objectives. Systems supporting independent media have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.

OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Uzbekistan Objective Score: 0.46

As seen in many of the former Soviet states that changed from communism to democracy, in Uzbekistan, democracy lives only on paper—especially when it comes to freedom of speech. Reality contradicts the state-controlled propaganda that portrays democracy as flourishing in Uzbekistan.

The Uzbekistan constitution guarantees the freedom of thought, expression, and convictions, and all state bodies are obliged constitutionally to allow any citizen access to information relating to rights and interests. The legal framework concerning the freedom of media corresponds to all norms of international human rights. However, this legal framework is far from perfect and has plenty of loopholes, which limit the scope of journalism.

Moreover, virtually all power in the government is in the hands of the president Islam Karimov, who ignored the article of the constitution that prohibits a third presidential term. He ran for the presidency again in December 2007 and won the election. Clearly, authorities respect neither the constitution nor other laws on the media, creating highly unfavorable conditions for protection of the freedom of speech.

In 2006, the Uzbek government issued a decree stating that journalists and ordinary citizens of Uzbekistan have no right to cooperate with foreign media that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has not accredited. After the bloody Andijan events, when foreign media disseminated to the whole world the shocking news about the uprising and massacre, the government nearly stopped accrediting foreign media.² This decree renders it impossible for the foreign media to hire Uzbek citizens as sprinters to get firsthand information.

Licensing of broadcast media is managed by the State Inspection of Communication, the government agency in charge of controlling mail and telecommunications system. The Agency for Press and Information is responsible for registering print media, polygraphic activity, and advertising agencies. On paper, legal provisions guarantee fairness and transparency of the licensing process, but reality contradicts the law. Given the government's harsh treatment of opposition interests, the licensing for broadcasting and printing is given only to trusted people close to the inner circle of the government. Hence, there is no competition or fairness in obtaining media licenses, although applications

² The Ministry of Foreign Affairs claims that there are seven Russian, two British, one French, one Belgian, four Chinese, three Turkish, three Kyrgyz, two Kazakh, three Azeri news organizations accredited in 2009, as well as one Latvian, and one Iranian news organization. http://mfa.uz/rus/pressa_i_media_servis/slujba/sob_korr/.

are accepted openly. While appealing a rejected license application is technically possible, no media outlets attempt to appeal.

The legal framework guarantees that media may enter the market without unjustified restrictions, and reasonably protects the right to start and run a business. Given the harsh economic conditions, the State Tax Committee promised tax breaks for all economic entities in 2010. However, media companies face a more complicated registration process than other business entities, and they face additional bureaucratic obstacles in obtaining licenses as well.

Journalists are afraid to express freely opinions that are critical of government. The National Security Service reportedly sends all media outlets a list of topics that the media must not cover critically, and journalists and editors self-censor accordingly. The Uzbek media sector has no substantial pluralism, as the state's total control over the local media results in one-sided content that is always pro-government.

A few years ago, journalists in Uzbekistan were subjected to frequent physical attacks and harassment. However, when the international community started pressuring the Uzbek government, the authorities shifted their tactics in fighting independent journalists. Today, independent journalists collecting information critical of the government are most likely to be accused of libel, fraud, defamation, and extremist activities aimed at overthrowing the Uzbekistan constitutional regime.

Independent journalist Dilmurod Saiid was reportedly detained on February 22, 2009. Saiid worked at Ezgulik, a local human rights organization, where he defended Samarkand-area farmers. He also reported for a number of online news websites, including Voice of Freedom and Harakat, an independent news agency. Saiid was charged with extortion, and a local woman testified against him, stating she was forced by Saiid to extort money from a local journalist. After a five-month trial—in closed proceedings without his defense team, family members, press, or human rights defenders present—Saiid was found guilty and sentenced to 12-and-a-half years in prison. Human Rights Watch said that Saiid was “prosecuted and convicted because of his efforts to expose local officials’ abuse of power and corruption and his willingness to fight for the rights of farmers in the Samarkand region.”³

The very next day after Saiid's detention, another journalist, Kushodbek Usmonov, was arrested in Asaka, a city in the

³ Human Rights Watch, *Uzbekistan: Free Journalist Sentenced to Over 12 years*, <<http://www.hrw.org/ru/news/2009/08/03/uzbekistan-free-journalist-sentenced-12-years>> (August 3, 2009)

eastern region of Andijan. Usmonov, 67, was arrested on charges of hooliganism allegedly brought forward by his nephew. However, at the beginning of the court process, the prosecution changed the initial charges to libel and affront, Articles 139 and 140 of the Uzbekistan's criminal code. Usmonov was sentenced to six months in prison, and was released in July 2009 after completing his sentence. Human Rights Watch reported that during the trial, Usmonov "testified that he had been subjected to torture and ill-treatment, including being beaten with hard objects in the groin and abdomen, and being forced to lie naked face down and being threatened with rape if he did not confess his guilt."⁴ However, the judge ignored his statement that he had been tortured, and no investigation was held into the alleged torture. Human rights activists believe that Usmonov's critical publications of high-ranking authorities and police officials at the Andijan regional police department are the real reasons behind his arrest.

Umida Akhmedova, the prominent journalist and filmmaker, and director of *Burden of Virginity*, was arrested on January 13, 2009 by the city police department of Tashkent. She was criminally charged with insulting and libeling the Uzbek people through her works that depict the daily life of Uzbeks. In her documentary, sponsored by the Swiss embassy in Tashkent, Umida Akhmedova openly discusses the traditional ban on premarital sex, which is a taboo topic in local state-controlled media. Joel Simon, executive director at the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), stated in his appeal to Uzbekistan's president that the "conviction of

Umida Akhmedova on trumped-up charges of libeling and insulting the Uzbek people is yet another step backward for press freedom."⁵ In February 2010, Akhmedova was convicted of slandering and insulting the Uzbek people, though the three-year prison term carried by the conviction was waived. In addition, *Fergana.ru* reported that authorities are pressuring a woman appearing in the documentary to file a claim of a suffering against Akhmedova.⁶

The Internet is the least controlled mass media in the country, and the Uzbek government strenuously filters the information coming via Internet. Until 2006, Internet censorship and filtering was largely undeclared, and the Uzbek government denied its deployment of sophisticated technologies and adoption of laws to filter the Internet. Most international news agencies' websites are blocked. The Uzbek government understands that for the Uzbek opposition, which mainly lives in exile and cannot operate in the country, the only way to reach the Uzbek audience is via the Internet. Therefore, the government applies severe filtering of information coming from opposition and exiled dissidents. OpenNet Initiative reported, "Among the Commonwealth of Independent States countries, Uzbekistan is the undisputed leader in applying Internet controls."⁷

Citizen journalism, a new phenomenon flourishing in neighboring counties including Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, is not yet popular among Uzbek citizens. Even though Internet penetration is comparatively high in big cities of the country, people are not showing much interest in blogging, micro-blogging, podcasting, or videocasting. Uzbekistan's mass media law states that mass media includes "websites... and other forms of information transmission." As the law does not clearly define "website," any online page publishing information, including blogs, can be equated to mass media in Uzbekistan. However, no incidents of trying Uzbek bloggers under mass media laws have been reported to date.

The government does not control entrance to journalism schools. However, the authorities do impose restrictions on the professional activities of independent journalists. Independent journalists working for foreign media outlets are not given accreditation to work in the country. As only accredited journalists can attend most official events, many doors are closed to journalists with no accreditation.

LEGAL AND SOCIAL NORMS PROTECT AND PROMOTE FREE SPEECH AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION.

FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

- > Legal and social protections of free speech exist and are enforced.
- > Licensing of broadcast media is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
- > Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
- > Crimes against journalists or media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
- > State or public media do not receive preferential legal treatment, and law guarantees editorial independence.
- > Libel is a civil law issue; public officials are held to higher standards, and offended parties must prove falsity and malice.
- > Public information is easily accessible; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Media outlets have unrestricted access to information; this is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Entry into the journalism profession is free, and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

⁵ CPJ/IFEX, *CPJ urges Uzbekistan to acquit Umida Akhmedova, release imprisoned journalists*, <http://www.ifex.org/uzbekistan/2010/02/19/independent_journalists/> (February 17, 2010)

⁶ *Fergana.Ru, Uzbekistan: Za Umidoi Akhmedovoi Ustanovlena Slezhka*, (in Russian) <<http://www.ferghana.ru/news.php?id=14082&mode=snews>> (February 24, 2009)

⁷ OpenNet Initiative Uzbekistan fact sheet, <http://opennet.net/research/profiles/uzbekistan>

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Uzbekistan Objective Score: 0.61

Professional journalism standards in Uzbekistan remain low and are far from attaining international standards. Due to the lack of quality journalism schools and trainings, journalists working for state-controlled mass media make poor one-sided reports, and their work is more akin to propaganda than journalism. Government-sponsored journalism schools have not changed significantly since the Soviet Union era. When covering political and economic issues, journalists are often biased, as the state does not allow coverage of alternative viewpoints or those that contradict official opinions.

Despite the fact that blogging is gaining popularity in neighboring Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and is often conceived as citizen journalism there, blogging is not widespread in Uzbekistan. The Uzbek blogging community is mainly located in the LiveJournal platform. Wordpress, a famous blogging platform among the émigré Uzbek community, is blocked in Uzbekistan. Topics bloggers cover include movies, music, and leisure, but no politics. Uzbek bloggers never openly criticize the Karimov political regime or its officials, as they are afraid that the government can identify them easily by IP addresses and friend lists in their blogs. However, in November 2009, LiveJournal bloggers in Tashkent organized a flash mob via their blogs to gather and grieve over trees in the park that were cut with the decision of the government.

In the past, all journalists had to submit articles to authorities ahead of publication for approval. In 2002, the government banned this form of official censorship but replaced it with

post-publishing censorship, in which journalists and editors are punished for information already published. The National Security Service's list of topics that editors must avoid include the country's socio-economic problems, the activities of opposition parties, human rights violations, high ranking officials in the government, the president and his family, and Andijan events. Given the venality of judicial system of Uzbekistan, journalists have to self-censor in order to avoid any negative governmental repercussions.

Journalists cover key events and issues in the country only after obtaining approval from the authorities. Therefore, foreign media are generally the first to cover events, even in an emergency situation. Local media wait for the government's approval, and report only the government's version of events. That was the case with the 2005 Andijan events; explosions in a military depot in Kagan in 2008; and the May 2009 bombings in Khanabad, a town on the border with Kyrgyzstan. In that event, a group of armed militants attacked a police headquarters, customs checkpoint, and National Security Service office. As almost all foreign media outlets are banned in the country, information is often spread among the population by rumors.

Corruption in journalism is widespread, and can be linked to the low wages in mass media. Salaries are particularly low for local journalists in smaller cities. In the capital and larger cities, the situation is a bit different. The salaries in state-owned and private mass media are also a bit higher, as a result of income from multiple sources: government support, advertising, and sponsored articles and television programs. Journalists are frequently driven to quit, or find additional jobs, because of low wages. Ethical standards are not high, and journalists gladly accept gifts. Many do it openly, in fact, considering it a form of recognition for their work.

Entertainment programs prevail in broadcast media content. State-owned television channels are popular among consumers because of foreign soap operas. People are not typically interested in news programs on local television channels, as the programs are not objective and do not reflect the real situation in the country. Russian television channels remain popular.

Only state-owned media, and only those in the capital and big cities, have decent facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news. Private media, and media in smaller cities and remote areas, cannot even afford high-speed Internet. As noted in last year's report, some journalists in remote areas still are untrained in using new equipment, lack basic computer skills, and are unaware of the resources available via the Internet.

JOURNALISM MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF QUALITY.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

- > Reporting is fair, objective, and well sourced.
- > Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards.
- > Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.
- > Journalists cover key events and issues.
- > Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption.
- > Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming.
- > Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.
- > Quality niche reporting and programming exists (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Uzbekistan Objective Score: 0.55

Given the government's tight control of mass media, plurality of news in Uzbekistan is very poor. Widespread self-censorship severely affects the quantity of critical materials. Journalists are afraid to express alternative viewpoints on issues such as foreign and internal policy, economy, and religion.

Popular print media can be divided roughly into two categories by content: propaganda and entertainment. State-owned newspapers such as *Pravda Vostoka* and *Khalq So'zi* are propaganda-oriented publications. Just like *Pravda* during the Soviet era, these outlets usually represent the government and deliver its messages. Entertainment-oriented media typically publish crossword puzzles, celebrity news, and coverage of television programs. The media sector has something of a third category as well: privately owned Russian and Uzbek papers, including *Novosti Uzbekistana*, *Noviy Vek*, *Hurriyat* and *Mohiyat*. Less popular than entertainment and propaganda-oriented papers, they give government-friendly information and offer no alternative viewpoints.

With entertainment shows dominating their content, television channels can spare little time for news programs. The state channel Ozbekiston once had a popular primetime news show, *Ahborot* ("News" in Uzbek), but it has become a government mouthpiece, portraying only positive aspects of life in Uzbekistan. This trend is apparent with other television channels as well. Independent journalists joke among each other that if the Uzbek government persecutes them, they will flee to the utopian country portrayed in *Ahborot*, and request asylum.

The panelists believe that, paradoxically, the plurality of viewpoints in mass media has decreased since May 2002, when the Uzbek government eliminated official censorship. Previously, at least some critical materials about local governments, private business institutions, or low-profile authorities passed national censorship authorities, and as a high-profile governmental agency conducted the censorship, the subjects of these materials did not dare appeal.

Despite the government's desperate attempts to filter its content, the Internet remains the least controlled media in Uzbekistan. A small part of Uzbekistan's Internet-using population can find alternative viewpoints online. However, almost all websites with political and human rights content that the government views as sensitive remain inaccessible to Internet users in Uzbekistan. Uzbek Internet users complain constantly that they cannot access such websites as Eurasianet, Ferghana, Uznews, Centrasia, Lenta, IWPR, and

popular blogs Neweurasia and Registan, which are blocked in country because they present content critical of Uzbekistan. With the development of Internet tools for bypassing Internet filtering, advanced Internet users can surf blocked websites via so-called "anonymizers" and "proxy servers." However, Internet users also complain that popular anonymizers and proxy servers are constantly blocked. Due to Uzbekistan's extensive Internet filtering, Reporters Sans Frontières included the Uzbekistan government on its list of the world's top 12 "Enemies of the Internet."

Online social networks, such as Facebook and MySpace, are not yet used widely; however, the newly emerging Uzbek social network, VseTut, is becoming popular. Internet users in Uzbekistan mostly use the Russian online social networks Odnoklassniki and Moy Mir. Due to poor Internet speed, not everyone can use YouTube. However, it is popular among those who have access to high-speed Internet. Twitter, which is becoming popular in neighboring Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, has not taken off in Uzbekistan.

Prior to the elimination of official censorship, it was taboo to criticize the government's foreign and international policies, the president, his close people, or other high profile officials. However, official censorship passed critical materials targeting local issues, particularly feuilletons. After 2002, with the ban of official censorship, articles critical of local issues have almost dried up. On June 27, 2009, in his congratulatory address to Uzbek journalists on their professional holiday, president Islam Karimov called upon journalists to be braver and write critical articles about "pseudo-leaders," who believe that their official position "gives them a right to

MULTIPLE NEWS SOURCES PROVIDE CITIZENS WITH RELIABLE AND OBJECTIVE NEWS.

PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

- > A plurality of affordable public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet) exists.
- > Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not restricted.
- > State or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
- > Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media.
- > Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs.
- > Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.
- > A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources.

impose their personal wills on people.” Nevertheless, it did not result in elimination, or softening, of self-censorship in Uzbek media.

State-run media reflect only the government view, rarely rising above propaganda. Without any legal opposition in the country, Uzbek leaders receive disproportionately generous coverage. Last year’s study found that state media lean strongly toward educational and cultural programming.

Uzbekistan still has no independent news agencies. The government controls the gathering and dissemination of news through three main agencies: Uzbekistan National News Agency (state-run), Jahon (run by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and the Russian-language news agency Turkiston-Press. There are few differences between the agencies.

Ownership of private media outlets is not transparent; this information is not openly available. However, media experts believe that all media outlets in the country are owned and controlled by a certain group of people close to the president’s family.

As reported in last year’s MSI study, the media reflect and represent a very narrow spectrum of social interests. The government tolerates no controversial topics in the press.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Uzbekistan Objective Score: 0.64

Transparency International ranked Uzbekistan as the 7th most corrupt country in the world in 2009.⁸ Most media outlets, especially newspapers, struggle just to cover operational expenses, let alone turn a profit. There is an emerging advertising market, but it is fully controlled by the government. Deep-rooted corruption in political and economic spheres, and the heavy regulatory environment of Uzbekistan, do not allow media outlets and supporting firms to operate as efficient and professional businesses. Most media organizations would not survive if not for subsidies from the government or private owners.

Media organizations, both state and privately owned, work hard to diversify sources of income. With the diminishing interest of the population in news sources, informational newspapers are forced to survive mostly on state subsidies and a trickle of advertising revenue. In Uzbekistan, usually the yellow print media enjoy sales. The most popular yellow magazines are *Tasvir*, *Darakchi* and *7x7*, which are sold in

⁸ Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2009: http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2009/cpi_2009_table

Uzbekistan as well as Uzbek communities in neighboring Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan. Each of these newspapers claims weekly circulation from 40,000 to 60,000. However, state and private media outlets alike inflate circulation numbers in order to attract more advertisers.

According to governmental sources, Uzbekistan has about 1000 media outlets throughout the country. Most of them are at the district and village levels, focus on local news, and include very few promotional materials. However, in recent years, advertising in media has been developing to play a significant role with regional-level newspapers and magazines.

The media market of the capital city, Tashkent, is more developed and considerably ahead of regional media in placing advertisements. Several major publishing houses grab the biggest share of the advertising market. They include *Tasvir*, *The World of Economy and Law*, *Shark Press*, *Jahon*, and a few others. Large companies hold more than 40 percent of the country’s advertisement market. Despite how the advertisement market is developing, most media outlets still cannot survive without state subsidies.

In Uzbekistan, market research is in the early stages of development, and does not significantly shape the media products to the requirements of the market. SIAR-Uzbekistan, founded at the end of 2007 as a branch of SIAR Research and Consulting Group, conducts media market research. SIAR-Uzbekistan won the May 2007 tender of the Tashkent Advertising Association to undertake the first significant media research project in Uzbekistan since 1998.

In early 2009, SIAR-Uzbekistan conducted a People Meter analysis of Uzbekistan’s television channels. According to its findings, the most popular television channels among

INDEPENDENT MEDIA ARE WELL-MANAGED BUSINESSES, ALLOWING EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:

- > Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses.
- > Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources.
- > Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market.
- > Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards at commercial outlets.
- > Independent media do not receive government subsidies.
- > Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor products to the needs and interests of audiences.
- > Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably and independently produced.

capital city residents are the state channel Ozbekiston and the youth channel Yoshlar. The company also identified the 20 biggest television advertisers, most of which are mobile network operators and manufacturing companies. SIAR-Uzbekistan is also planning to evaluate the print media and radio in Uzbekistan.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Uzbekistan Objective Score: 0.46

The Andijan events in 2005, when governmental troops opened fire at unarmed civilians and reportedly killed hundreds, started a new, repressive era in Uzbekistan. Human rights watchdogs reported that the Uzbek government unleashed a fierce crackdown, unprecedented in proportion, on civil society. Due to restrictions and persecutions, many NGOs were forced to close down.

Today, the Uzbek government still exercises tight control on all professional unions and associations, trade associations, and NGOs. The few media organizations exist not to promote and protect rights of journalists and media organizations, but to keep them under the government's control.

National Association of Electronic Media (NAESMI), a professional association of private Uzbek broadcasters, represents television and radio outlets. Founded as part of a government initiative in 2004, NAESMI's purported main goal is to establish an equal market for broadcasters, encourage broadcasters' active participation in building civil society, represent common interests, and protect the rights of association members. However, media experts believe that NAESMI's true goal is to control the activities and content of broadcast media. Despite the stated voluntary nature of membership, members were reportedly forced to join the association under the threat of losing their licenses.

The Creative Union of Journalists, also founded by a 2004 government initiative, represents professional journalists in Uzbekistan. The charter claims that the union's main objectives are "to enhance the role and status of journalists in society, helping to protect the rights and interests of journalists working for various newspapers and magazines, television and radio stations, [and] publishing houses and news agencies, regardless of ownership." Due to the government's tight control, union activity is limited to representing journalists on the state level and organizing various competitions among them. The union does not protect the rights or interests of repressed journalists.

The Public Fund for Support and Development of Independent Print Media and News Agencies supports

non-governmental print media. The stated aim of the fund is to support independent print media by funding development projects aimed at strengthening professionalism and technical capacity. Just like other supporting institutions, the activity of the fund is also friendly to the government. Independent media observers state that the projects implemented by the fund do not include projects in strengthening freedom of speech, championing pluralism, or fighting censorship.

Uzbekistan has no supporting organizations to protect the interests of bloggers and citizen journalists, and no media development NGOs are operating in the country. Internews Network used to provide journalism training, but it had to leave Uzbekistan in 2005.

The quality of journalism schools in Uzbekistan is low. Journalism departments at government-sponsored universities, such as the National University of Uzbekistan and the State University of World Languages, have poorly developed curricula and need to be updated to meet modern journalism requirements.

Short-term professional journalism training sessions are attended only by independent journalists. The National Television and Radio Company offers training on technical topics. International media development organizations operating in neighboring countries, especially Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, invite Uzbek journalists to their journalism training sessions. The US Department of State, the Open Society Institute, and other international organizations offer training programs for journalists from Central Asia, including Uzbekistan, in neighboring countries, Europe, and the US. Independent journalists from Uzbekistan do attend these trainings; Uzbek journalists attended at least two of these courses, in online journalism and investigative

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS FUNCTION IN THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA.

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

- > Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services.
- > Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights.
- > NGOs support free speech and independent media.
- > Quality journalism degree programs that provide substantial practical experience exist.
- > Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
- > Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and unrestricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

journalism. However, competition is tight, and only a limited number of journalists meet the requirements and are accepted. Therefore, such programs are not an option for the vast majority of journalists. Furthermore, these well-trained independent journalists, who are often critical of government, face constant harassment and prosecution by Uzbek authorities. A number of professional journalists had to leave Uzbekistan, and are now in exile.

There are both state-owned and private printing facilities in the country. The Press and Information Agency is in charge of the country's printing and distribution infrastructure. Therefore, private print houses usually print materials friendly to the government, in order to avoid problems with authorities.

The state controls all media distribution channels, except for some privately owned shops and kiosks. In 2009, more than 34 ISPs were operating throughout Uzbekistan. They all receive Internet service through the state-owned company Uzbektelecom, which filters Internet content critical of the government.

List of Panel Participants

Due to the political environment in Uzbekistan, IREX did not conduct an in-country panel. This chapter represents desk research conducted on the situation, interviews, and the results of questionnaires filled out by several people familiar with the situation of media in the country.