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UZBEKISTAN

Mass media in Uzbekistan portray the country as democratic and its authorities as loyal to democratic principles. The legal framework of Uzbekistan guarantees a right for independent information, freedom of speech, and bans censorship. However, the on-the-ground reality is quite the opposite. Since the 2005 Andijan massacre in Uzbekistan, when government troops clashed with demonstrators and hundreds of civilians were killed, the Uzbek government has been keeping a tight control over all of the country's mass media and putting continuous pressure on foreign media and independent journalists, rights activists, and opposition parties. The year 2010 in Uzbekistan was marked as yet another year of pressure on mass media and freedom of expression in the country.

Even though censorship was officially banned in 2002, print and broadcast media in Uzbekistan still do not enjoy editorial freedom and are subject to severe censorship. In 2010 the Uzbek government held 11 journalists in prison. One of them, Jamshid Karimov, is a nephew of President Islam Karimov.

New criminal cases continued unabated in 2010. In January authorities imprisoned Khairulla Khamidov, popular journalist well known for his religious views. In February, the authorities charged journalist and photographer Umida Akhmedova with "slander and insult against the Uzbek nation." In October, journalist Vladimir Berezovski, editor-in-chief of the news website www.vesti.uz was also charged with slander and insult. In November, Voice of America correspondent Abdumalik Boboyev was taken to court and charged with defaming and insulting the Uzbek people and threatening public order. In December, two journalists, Saodat Omonova and Malohat Eshankulova, were dismissed from their jobs with public television after their public demonstration against corruption and censorship at the television station.

Since 2005 foreign media have been gradually expelled from the country. The Internet, which is intensively developing, is under tight control as well. The Uzbek government applies sophisticated technology to block all websites that have critical content about the Uzbek government. News from outside Uzbekistan that might be of interest to its citizens, such as the violence against ethnic Uzbeks that took place in Kyrgyzstan in June 2010, is notably absent from media offerings.

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

UZBEKISTAN AT A GLANCE

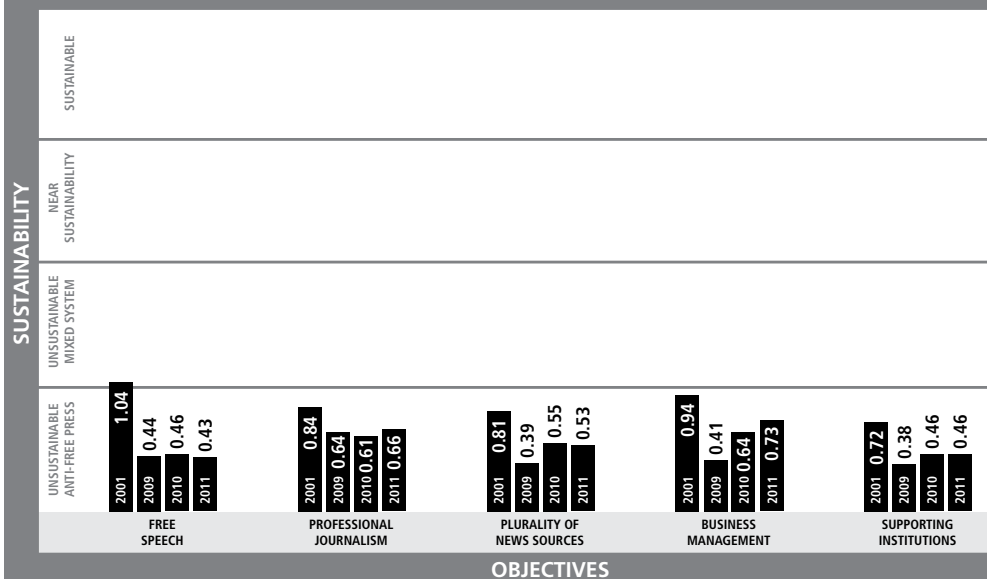
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 28,128,600 (July 2011 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 (2009-Atlas):** \$30.64 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2010)
- > **GNI per capita (2009-PPP):** \$2,910 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2010)
- > **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 Sozi* (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:** 4.689 million (2009 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: UZBEKISTAN



Scores for all years may be found online at http://www.irex.org/system/files/EE_msiscscores.xls

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: 0.43

Legal and social protections of free speech exist in the abstract but are rarely enforced in Uzbekistan's authoritarian political climate. Although the Uzbekistan Constitution guarantees for all citizens equal access to information and prohibits censorship, other contradictory laws impose significant restrictions on freedom of information and the authorities exert rigid control over the editorial policies of mass media, censoring any information interpreted as critical of the regime.

Similarly, while the constitution provides for a separation of powers, President Islam Karimov exercises total control over the government. Karimov has continuously ignored or revised the constitutional limits on presidential terms, and has ruled the ostensibly democratic Uzbekistan since its independence from the Soviet Union. On paper, both private and government media are editorially independent but in practice, all media in the country, especially the government media, are subject to editorial pressure and direct regulation by the administration. As a result, media outlets in Uzbekistan, and particularly public media, are viewed as government propaganda tools. Any media or independent journalists daring to speak out against the government are taken to court—usually for slander or for threatening

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 or registration of media protects a public interest and is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
- > Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
- > Crimes against media professionals, citizen reporters, and media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
- > The law protects the editorial independence of state or public media.
- > Libel is a civil law issue, public officials are held to higher standards, offended party must prove falsity and malice.
- > Public information is easily available; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media, journalists, and citizens.
- > Media outlets' access to and use of local and international news and news sources is not restricted by law.
- > Entry into the journalism profession is free and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

Khamidov was charged with Article 216 of the Criminal Code—organization or active participation in a banned social or religious group, in this case Jihadchilar (Jihadists). Observers report he was arrested after making a public speech at a religious ceremony that was secretly videotaped by the NSS.

the regime and public order. Over the past few years the government has used the pretense of combating Islamic extremism to crack down on any opposition and repress freedom of speech.

On paper, the procedure for licensing media is straightforward and impartial, but as is the case with many aspects of media in Uzbekistan, the reality is often more complicated and can be unfair and politicized. While legislation does not impose serious restrictions on the registration or licensing of the media, given the harsh treatment of opposition interests, in practice the licenses for broadcast and print media are given only to trusted people close to the inner circle of the government. The State Inspection of Communication, the government agency in charge of controlling mail and telecommunications systems, manages licensing of broadcast media. The Uzbekistan Agency for Press and Information is tasked with registering mass media, including advertising agencies. During sensitive political events, such as presidential elections, unofficial bans on registration of new broadcast and print media have occasionally been imposed.

The National Security Service (NSS) of Uzbekistan tightly controls the media and maintains pressure on independent journalists, who are often subject to unjustified criminal charges. For example, on January 21 2010, high profile journalist Hairulla Khamidov was arrested by the NSS. Khamidov, a well-known sports writer also hosted a popular radio show, *Kholislik sari (Voice of Impartiality)*, at the semi-privately-owned radio *Navruz*. In his show, Khamidov offered advice and social commentary based on traditional Islamic values. His program often included topics usually neglected by the official media, such as corruption, poverty, prostitution, public health problems, and other social crises.

In addition to his radio program, Khamidov also published poetry on the internet that addressed similar themes. Khamidov was charged with Article 216 of the Criminal Code—organization or active participation in a banned social or religious group, in this case *Jihadchilar* (Jihadists). Observers report he was arrested after making a public

Emails, blogs, forums and chat rooms, particularly ICQ and Mail.Ru Agent, are under surveillance.

speech at a religious ceremony that was secretly videotaped by the NSS. Human rights organizations claim that the evidence used to convict Khamidov was inadequate but he was sentenced to six years in prison.¹ According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, Uzbekistan is a leading jailer of journalists in Eurasia.²

The Criminal Code's article 139 on libel is often used by the Uzbek authorities in cases against independent journalists who report on taboo social issues or criticize the government. As reported last year, well-known photographer Umida Akhmedova was charged with libel and insult against the Uzbek people because of her controversial documentary "Burden of Virginity," which focused on a sensitive issue in Uzbek culture: the traditional ban on premarital sex. The court found Akhmedova guilty of charges that carried a prison sentence up to three years but the conviction was dismissed as arbitrarily as it was employed when a judge granted Akhmedova an amnesty in honor of the 18th anniversary of Uzbekistan's independence.

In October 2010, Vladimir Berezovski, a Russian editor-in-chief of the news website www.vesti.uz and the Central Asian correspondent of the Russian newspaper *The Parliament*, was charged under Article 139 of the Criminal Code when the Communications and Information Agency decided that Berezovski's articles reporting on Uzbekistan's destruction of Russian heritage sites such as churches, monuments, or street names was libeling and insulting against the Uzbek people. In court hearings on October 13, the court found Berezovski guilty but the presiding judge freed him under an amnesty program.³

In November 2010, yet another journalist was charged with defaming and insulting the Uzbek people and threatening public order. Abdumalik Boboyev, one of few independent journalists remaining in Uzbekistan, was taken to court for collaborating with the Uzbek service of the U.S. funded Voice of America radio. Three out of four charges against him concern his professional work. The fourth charge is

for "illegal entry into the country" and is believed to be trumped-up. With these charges, Abdumalik Boboyev, who pleaded not guilty, could face a five-year jail sentence. During the court process held on October 15 the judge found Boboyev guilty and fined the journalist \$10,000 dollars.

The U.S. embassy in Tashkent, which has been closely observing Boboyev's case, expressed its concerns about the state of media freedom in Uzbekistan, saying the use "of the criminal justice system to punish journalists for freely expressed views is contrary to Uzbekistan's constitution and international obligations, and has a chilling effect on journalists throughout the country."⁴

Government officials often arbitrarily limit freedom to information. The legal framework provides a special protection to journalists conducting investigations; however, access to information may be denied under the pretext of protecting state secrets. The Law on Protection of State Secrets does not offer a specific definition of key words, and the resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers, which contains a definition, is not available to the public. Virtually any of the government's officials routinely refuse journalists information. The law requires an oral request for information from a journalist to be answered as soon as possible, and a written request within 30 days, but this requirement is almost never fulfilled. The same law stipulates additional grounds for restricting access to information to protect the "moral values of society, spiritual, cultural and scientific potential."

As reported last year, the Uzbekistan government has continued since 2006, following the tragic Andijan events, to prevent journalists and ordinary citizens from cooperation with foreign media that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has not accredited. Experts say that it is due to the foreign media's active role in disseminating the shocking news about the uprising and massacre to the whole world, after which the Uzbek government nearly stopped accrediting foreign media. This decree renders it impossible for the foreign media to hire Uzbek citizens as stringers to get firsthand information.

Even though the system in Uzbekistan is very harsh on journalists freely expressing their opinions, some journalists still dare to speak out publicly against censorship and corruption in the mass media of Uzbekistan. In December Saodat Omonova and Malohat Eshankulova, journalists from public television station *Yoshlar*, demonstrated against corruption and censorship at a square in the center of Tashkent. Three days later they were dismissed from work. The journalists filed a case against the management of public

¹For more information on Hairulla Khamidov's case see: "Uzbek Rights Activists to Fight for Sports Writer's Release," Institute for War & Peace Reporting, June 18, 2010. <http://iwpr.net/report-news/uzbek-rights-activists-fight-sports-writer%E2%80%99s-release>

²"Attacks on the Press 2010" Committee to Protect Journalists. <http://www.cpj.org/2011/02/attacks-on-the-press-2010-uzbekistan.php>

³For more information on Berezovski's case see Ferghana news, <http://www.ferghananews.com/article.php?id=6750>

⁴Statement of U.S. Embassy in Tashkent on Boboyev Appeal, <http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/pr111210.html>. November 12, 2010

television for what they believe is an unlawful dismissal. The legal processes on the case are ongoing.

In March 2010, Central Asian satellite television channel K+ was to air a show “Freedom of Unarmed Man,” about Muhammad Salih, a prominent exiled Uzbek opposition leader who now resides in Turkey. The show was to be aired on March 6 at 5:15 GMT. However, when the show started, signal of the channel first deteriorated and then completely stopped. The signal came back when the show finished. The television channel said that there had been unsanctioned external interference to the link between the studio and the satellite. On March 5 the Uzbek service of the Prague based Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) aired information about the K+ show planned on March 6. In an interview to RFE/RL on March 7, Muhammad Salih accused the Uzbek security services in blocking the signal of K+.

The Internet is still the least controlled of the mass media, but the government is strenuously attempting to filter the Internet using sophisticated technology. 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, Uzbekistan is the undisputed leader in applying Internet controls.”

Emails, blogs, forums and chat rooms, particularly ICQ and Mail.Ru Agent, are under surveillance. Reporters without Borders reported that in 2010 several people have been arrested in Uzbekistan for their alleged membership in extremist religious organizations after being spotted from their conversations on Mail.ru Agent.⁵

Social networking is becoming popular in Uzbekistan. According to the survey of the Uzbek service of RFE/RL, a majority of Uzbek netizens are members of Russian social networking services Odnoklassniki.ru and “Moy Mir”—840,000 and 640,000 users respectively.⁶ In September 2010 in Uzbekistan there were just 25,000 members of the biggest social networking service Facebook. In January 2011 their number reached 60,000. Facebook has occasionally been temporarily blocked, possibly in an attempt to prevent Uzbek users from reading the content of banned independent websites via the social network.

⁵ Reporter Without Borders, *Enemies of the Internet—Countries under Surveillance*, <http://en.rsf.org/internet-enemie-uzbekistan,36688.html>. May 12, 2010

⁶ Link from the Uzbek Service of RFE/RL

There is an unofficial list of topics that editors of both private and state media are made to understand by the NSS that they must avoid.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Uzbekistan Objective Score: 0.66

In his February 2010 address to the parliament, president Islam Karimov criticized national mass media’s quality and called media outlets to be more active in news reporting—all while keeping the media under tight control of the government and preventing journalism in Uzbekistan from achieving professional standards of quality. Journalism schools in Uzbekistan offer old programs that have not changed much since the fall of the Soviet Union, and since the 2005 massacre in Andijan the media continue to be heavily scrutinized by the government, resulting in one-sided, politically-oriented coverage that serves only to propagate the viewpoints of the president’s regime.

Mass media regularly recount events in a one-sided way. This is partly due to the tight control of media and the restrictions imposed on journalists by the authorities. Even those few foreign and international mass media representatives who manage to receive accreditation from the foreign ministry to work in Uzbekistan tend to cover events in a more tepid way, occasionally echoing the official point of view, in order to avoid being asked to leave the country. Comments from

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 and retain qualified personnel within the media profession.
- > Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming.
- > Facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.
- > Quality niche reporting and programming exist (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

Journalists gladly accept gifts or money in exchange for coverage of an event, as many journalists are very much in need of extra revenue to supplement their low wages.

sources that are likely to provide an alternative side to the official Tashkent position, such as opposition representatives, human rights activists, or international organizations are unofficially banned from being cited by the media. Journalists have little incentive to go beyond official statements and conducting background research for additional information is almost never practiced.

Until 2002 Uzbekistan practiced official censorship, requiring all journalists to submit their articles to authorities ahead of publication for approval. In 2002—the year a second referendum extended President Islam Karimov’s term in power—the Uzbek government banned this form of official censorship. However, all that has changed since is that the burden of censorship has shifted to journalists, who face the threat of punishment for offending information once it is published. There is an unofficial list of topics that editors of both private and state media are made to understand by the NSS that they must avoid. This generally includes 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. As a result, all mass media practice self-censorship to varying degrees.

State media, heavily controlled by authorities, practices the most rigid self-censorship. Among print media, private Russian-language weeklies *Zerkalo XXI* and *Novosti Uzbekistana* are less censored. Some media outlets are trying to raise topical issues and cover major events; however, in most cases access to information is severely restricted. For example, it was difficult for journalists in Uzbekistan to report on the situation with ethnic Uzbek refugees in Andijan fleeing the ethnic conflict in southern Kyrgyzstan in the summer of 2010.

Online media are exposed to censorship to a lesser extent. Online economic magazine *Economic Review* (www.review.uz), published with support of UNDP in Uzbekistan—one of the most popular news sites—and privately owned news website www.gazeta.uz are comparatively independent and free websites.

Media corruption is widespread throughout the country. Journalists gladly accept gifts or money in exchange for

coverage of an event, as many journalists are very much in need of extra revenue to supplement their low wages. Some associations of mass media, such as the National Association of Electronic Media, have developed their own code of conduct for journalists but lack the will or mechanisms to control its application in practice.

The audience for entertainment programming far surpasses that of news and informational programming in Uzbekistan. State television channels usually broadcast information and documentary programs and coverage of political events with marked bias, whereas private television channels mostly show entertainment programs. Private media refrain from news and political reporting for fear of reprisals and people rely on foreign media via cable channels for more reliable news coverage.

As noted in last year’s report, only state-owned media, and only those in the capital and large cities, have decent facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news. Many media organizations are badly equipped, with a shortage of cameras, computers, and voice recorders. Computers and other equipment that is available are often technically obsolete. There is great difficulty in connecting to high speed Internet and subscribing to news feeds from major news agencies. However, while inadequate technical equipment certainly hinders efficient production and distribution of news, the lack of modern equipment is much less an impediment to quality journalism in Uzbekistan than are the numerous administrative restrictions placed on media by the government.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Uzbekistan Objective Score: 0.53

There are a variety of public sources of information in Uzbekistan, yet plurality of news is very poor as almost all of them express the official view. The national media are heterogeneous in ownership but the information provided is almost completely homogeneous. In Uzbekistan, it is enough to be a consumer of one media outlet to know what the other 99 percent of media cover.

An exception is the monthly magazine *Economic Review*, whose opinion may, while in a veiled form, differ from the official. Websites offering content critical of the government continue to be blocked within Uzbekistan, such as Eurasianet, Ferghana, Uznews, Centrasia, Lenta, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, and the Uzbek-language BBC. Facebook and other social networks are blocked intermittently. Web access, particularly by young people, is also restricted

through uneven surveillance of emails and cybercafés, allegedly to monitor membership in banned or radical religious organizations.⁷

Given the bias of national media and the blocking of much of the foreign media, people's access to information is notably restricted. Economic factors also restrict citizens' access to media. Prices for high-speed Internet connections are high, though slightly decreasing. Outside of the capital and in remote areas Internet penetration is very low. Moreover, most people are prevented from accessing the foreign media that is available online since it is mostly in English and Russian. Minority language media exist but it is of poor quality with low professional standards and is also subject to censorship.

Private news media rely almost entirely on information provided by the government media and press services of state agencies. In addition to Uzbekistan National News Agency (state-run) and Jahon (run by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), there is a non-governmental news agency, Turkiston-Press, which was created by presidential decree and remains loyal to the state. Turkiston-Press specializes in economic news, and the main consumers of Turkiston-Press's information are foreign embassies, international organizations represented in Uzbekistan, and foreign businesses. Uzbek media outlets do not subscribe to the news agency's feed, partly because of high prices, and partly due to the lack of interest in such

MULTIPLE NEWS SOURCES PROVIDE CITIZENS WITH RELIABLE, OBJECTIVE NEWS.

PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

- > Plurality of public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, internet, mobile) exists and offer multiple viewpoints.
- > Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not restricted by law, economics, or other means.
- > State or public media reflect the views of the political spectrum, are non-partisan, and serve the public interest.
- > Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for media outlets.
- > Private media produce their own news.
- > Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge the 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.
- > The media provide news coverage and information about local, national, and international issues.

⁷ For more on Internet access in Uzbekistan see Reporters Without Borders "Internet Enemies" profile of Uzbekistan March 11,2011 <http://en.rsf.org/ouzbekistan-uzbekistan-11-03-2011,39765.html>

Facebook and other social networks are blocked intermittently. Web access, particularly by young people, is also restricted through uneven surveillance of emails and cybercafés, allegedly to monitor membership in banned or radical religious organizations.

information. Some non-state media such as www.gazeta.uz provide readers with their own original content, but such examples are rare.

Entertainment shows dominate the content of private television channels. Little time is spared for news programs, especially as channels do not have the financial resources and producers would just as well avoid risking a confrontation with the government by avoiding news altogether. The state channel *Ozbekiston* once had a popular primetime news show, *Ahborot (News)*, 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. There is a popular joke among independent journalists in Uzbekistan: "If you want to see what heaven looks like, watch Uzbek TV programs, and if you want to see what hell looks like, visit Uzbekistan."

Media ownership is opaque and consumers usually do not know who owns the media or even if it is in public or private hands. There is a stereotype in Uzbekistan that all non-entertainment media is state-owned, primarily due to the identical information presented by most media outlets.

Overall, mass media in Uzbekistan have a very selective approach in covering events both of domestic and international significance. Newspapers, television, and radio, and available online media mostly cover events that show the government and the president in a favorable light. Events of regional and international significance are often neglected. For example, the unrest in Kyrgyzstan in April and June 2010 was barely covered in national media outlets.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Uzbekistan Objective Score: 0.73

Mass media organizations in Uzbekistan are rarely self-sustainable businesses. Most media are totally dependent on subsidies from either the government or private owners. The media market of the capital city, Tashkent, is more

Jahon, and perhaps also Pravda Vostoka, are two of the few major weeklies that could be said to be self-sustainable as a result of the expensive advertising on their pages.

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. *Jahon*, and perhaps also *Pravda Vostoka*, are two of the few major weeklies that could be said to be self-sustainable as a result of the expensive advertising on their pages. Large companies hold more than 40 percent of the country's advertisement market.

As reported last year, 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 in 2007 as a branch of SIAR Research and Consulting Group, conducts media market research. In May 2007 SIAR-Uzbekistan won the tender of the Tashkent Advertising Association to undertake the first significant media research project in Uzbekistan since 1998.

In 2009, SIAR-Uzbekistan conducted a People Meter analysis of Uzbekistan's television channels. According to its findings, the most popular television channels among capital city residents are the state channel Ozbekiston and the public channel Yoshlar. The company also identified the 20 biggest

MEDIA ARE WELL-MANAGED ENTERPRISES, ALLOWING EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:

- > Media outlets operate as efficient and self-sustaining enterprises.
- > 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.
- > Government subsidies and advertising are distributed fairly, governed by law, and neither subvert editorial independence nor distort the market.
- > Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor the product to the needs and interests of the audience.
- > Broadcast ratings, circulation figures, and internet statistics are reliably and independently produced.

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, though so far there has not been significant print media and radio market research. News websites usually rely on statistics provided by modern sophisticated public Internet counters such as www.liveinternet.ru, www.rating.uz, and Google Analytics.

Despite how the advertisement market is developing, most media outlets still cannot survive without state subsidies. Regardless, the Uzbek government need not use economic means to control the media.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Uzbekistan Objective Score: 0.46

The Uzbek government continues, as it has since the Andijan events in 2006, to prevent NGOs that support freedom of expression and independent media from operating in the country, and exercises tight control on all professional unions and trade associations. The few media organizations exist not to promote and protect the rights of journalists and media organizations, but to keep them under the government's control.

National Association of Electronic Media (NAESMI) is the only professional association aimed at representing interests of private Uzbek broadcasters. NAESMI was founded in 2004,

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS FUNCTION IN THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA.

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

- > Trade associations represent the interests of media owners and managers and provide member services.
- > Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights and promote quality journalism.
- > NGOs support free speech and independent media.
- > Quality journalism degree programs exist providing substantial practical experience.
- > Short-term training and in-service training institutions and programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
- > Sources of media equipment, newsprint, and printing facilities are apolitical, not monopolized, and not restricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (e.g., kiosks, transmitters, cable, internet, mobile) are apolitical, not monopolized, and not restricted.
- > Information and communication technology infrastructure sufficiently meets the needs of media and citizens.

as a part of a government initiative to purportedly establish an equal market for broadcasters, encourage their active participation in building of civil society, represent common interests, and protect the rights of association members. However, media experts believe that NAESMI is used by the authorities to control the activities and content of broadcast media. Despite the stated voluntary nature of membership, membership is reportedly unofficially required for all who wish to keep their licenses.

Journalism schools offer outdated curricula and are suffering from a huge shortage of qualified teachers. Instruction is theoretically based and practical training is lacking. Media outlets are extremely reluctant to accept graduates of journalism schools to permanent positions.

There are few short-term courses and trainings that would allow journalists to improve existing and acquire new skills. The few short-term professional journalism training sessions that are available are attended only by independent journalists. International media development organizations operating in neighboring countries, especially Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, invite Uzbek journalists to their journalism training sessions, but media development NGOs were forced to leave Uzbekistan in 2005.

Even though citizen journalism is becoming more popular, there is no supporting organization for bloggers. The law on mass media in Uzbekistan identifies blogs and any other form of website as mass media. However, journalists' trade unions and associations do not support bloggers. There have been no cases of trials or persecution of bloggers yet, as the Uzbek blogosphere residing in Uzbekistan is not too critical of the government.

All media distribution channels are under the rigid control of the government. Therefore, newsstands are state monopolies, with the exception of a few privately owned shops and kiosks. In some cases it is possible to distribute print media through alternative distributors.

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

List of Panel Participants

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