

## **Assault on International Broadcasting in the Former Soviet Union...**

Authoritarian governments use their control over news media to fend off scrutiny and criticism of official activities. While Russia's authorities have focused their suppression on domestic news outlets, international broadcasters including BBC, Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) have not been spared. Each of these broadcasters, whose programming has enjoyed dedicated listeners across Russia interested in an alternative voice, has been targeted in recent years by Kremlin-orchestrated intimidation campaigns. In the case of RFE/RL, its affiliate partners — Russian radio stations that rebroadcast their programs as part of their own formats — have been audited and subjected to a range of harassment. Since 2005, 20 RFE/RL affiliates have been closed, the majority due to political pressure. Prior to the crackdown, the Russian Service had affiliates in all 10 of Russia's largest cities, whereas today Russian Service programs can be heard on local stations in less than half. Similar efforts to obstruct international broadcasting have been undertaken in other countries. There is no local rebroadcasting of RFE/RL content in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan. Several other countries, including Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, have used official means such as bans and temporary states of emergency to frustrate domestic access to RFE/RL programs. Many of these governments are also using a variety of means to hinder free access to information on the internet, including news and analysis produced by international broadcasters. In 2008, a massive cyberattack was launched against the website of RFE/RL's Belarus Service, disrupting access to all of RFE/RL's websites for nearly two days. Governments in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Armenia also block domestic access to RFE/RL websites.

### **...and in Asia**

Chinese authorities jam U.S. government-funded Radio Free Asia (RFA) broadcasts by co-channeling Chinese opera, funeral music gongs, and static, as well as by overriding RFA's signal with their own programming. The Chinese government publically professed an attitude of openness toward international news organizations and nongovernmental organizations during the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, but it continued to block access to the RFA website. RFA encounters these and similar problems with jamming, censorship, and intimidation by authoritarian regimes elsewhere in Asia, including in North Korea and Burma. Despite these efforts at repression, RFA's audience still manages to access broadcasts through short- and medium-wave radio, satellite links, and on the internet via proxy servers.