

RFE/RL Review

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May 1-31, 2007

ARMENIAN SERVICE DRAWS OSCE PRAISE FOR ELECTION REPORTING

RFE/RL's Armenian Service offered intensive coverage of the May 12 parliamentary elections in Armenia. On Election Day and the day after, the Service broadcast live for over three hours, with special election programs produced in both Prague and Yerevan. The coverage was singled out for praise by the OSCE/ODIHR joint observation mission for its balance and thoroughness (the OSCE/ODIHR "Statement Of Preliminary Findings And Conclusions" can be found at http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2007/05/24424_en.pdf).

*** The Director of RFE/RL's Armenian Service, Hrair Tamrazian, may be reached by email at <tamrazianh@rferl.org>. The Armenian Service's website is at <http://www.azatutyun.am/>; English-language news about events in Armenia can be found at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarchive/country/armenia.html>*

IN RFE/RL INTERVIEWS, MACEDONIAN PRESIDENT PLEDGES UNILATERAL RECOGNITION OF KOSOVO...

On May 26, RFE/RL's South Slavic and Albanian Languages Service broadcast an exclusive interview with Macedonian President Branko Crvenkovski, in which he pledged that Macedonia would unilaterally recognize Kosovo if the United Nations Security Council fails to approve a resolution calling for supervised independence for Kosovo and if United States and the European Union then decide to recognize Kosovo without the UN. The interview made headlines in Serbia, Kosovo and Macedonia (<http://www.makdenes.org/programs/intervju/ma/2007/05/4A3F86B4-6484-472F-98FD-65E3408C9CD9.ASP>; <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/article/2007/05/26/036f7f91-8b46-4cb4-8ac2-3e6a5955bf46.html>).

...U.S. DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE BACKS UNSC RESOLUTION

On May 23, RFE/RL's South Slavic and Albanian Languages Services aired an interview with U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Rosemary Di Carlo. During the interview, the senior U.S. diplomat said it was her country's "intention to try to have this resolution passed during our presidency [of the UN Security Council in May-eds.]. We are working toward that goal." The interview, by SSALS broadcaster Ilirijana Bajo was widely quoted by media in Kosovo and the region (transcript in Albanian at <http://www.europaelire.org/programs/interview/2007/05/20070523121555.asp>; in

(more)

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http://www.rferl.org/features/features_Article.aspx?m=05&y=2007&id=851531DA-F6CA-4479-A7B8-1B0F61E1D910).

*** The Director of RFE/RL's South Slavic and Albanian Languages Service (SSALS), Omer Karabeg, may be reached by email at <karabego@rferl.org>. The SSALS website in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian is located at <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org>, in Albanian at <http://www.europaelire.org> and in Macedonian at <http://www.makdenes.org>; English-language news about events in Macedonia can be found at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarchive/country/macedonia.html> and in Kosovo at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarchive/subregion/kosovo.html>*

BELARUS SERVICE COVERS FAILED BID FOR UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL...

Throughout May, the Belarus Service broadcast detailed coverage of the Belarusian government's unsuccessful campaign for a seat on the United Nations Human Rights Council. In the days leading up to the May 17 vote, the Belarus Service broadcast interviews with Belarusian and international human-rights activists, opposition politicians, Vaclav Havel, and members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The Service's website featured the results of the vote minutes after it was taken. After the vote, the Service provided expert analysis of the ramifications of the decision on Belarus, as well as reactions from the Belarusian government ("certain countries use the UN to settle political scores and to put pressure on other countries"), opposition politicians, the U.S. Ambassador to the UN, and representatives of UN Watch (<http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2007/5/33FDC5AF-FAA6-40FC-92DA-4CE3673ABEF6.html>); <http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2007/5/10588568-25A9-42BC-B31C-36F28E3A61F1.html>; <http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2007/5/B5C34557-A90D-43A0-B562-BEC5BA52E34E.html>; <http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2007/5/8E96E39C-9991-402A-87B0-61E34437FE77.html>; <http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2007/5/65E28590-D9EC-4E87-9558-BCFFBEDD7493.html>; <http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2007/5/1DED8764-DE17-4DFF-9048-EBD4EEF451E1.html>)

...COVERS DEMOCRATIC FORCES CONGRESS IN MINSK

The Belarus Service provided live, online coverage of the May 26-27 Congress of Democratic Forces of Belarus, held at the Culture Palace of the Minsk Automobile Factory. Coverage included constantly updated text and audio reports on the congress (<http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2007/5/418CF401-0600-4F2F-A966-EA6857DB30F0.html>) as well as an extensive gallery of photos taken at the event (<http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2007/5/407BAACB-5B65-4146-B933-49E99DD35DE7.html>).

*** The Director of RFE/RL's Belarus Service, Alexander Lukashuk, may be reached by email at <lukashuka@rferl.org>. The Belarus Service's website is at <http://www.svaboda.org/>; English-language news about events in Belarus can be found at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarchive/country/belarus.html>*

AZERBAIJANI SERVICE REPORTS ON NEW MEDIA REPRESSIONS

Local authorities, citing safety regulations, descended on the Baku offices of the independent weekly newspaper "Realny Azerbaijan" and daily newspaper "Gundalik Azarbaycan" on May 20 and proceeded to evict the editorial staffs of both publications from the premises. Azerbaijani Service Baku Bureau correspondent Babek Bakir was at the building and reported live for the service on the eviction (<http://www.azadliq.org/Article/2007/05/25/20070525152125847.html>).

On May 22, two days after his newspapers were evicted from their offices, editor Eynulla Fatullayev was informed by Azerbaijani authorities that he was under investigation on charges of terrorism. In April, Fatullayev was sentenced to 2.5 years in prison on charges of libeling and insulting Azerbaijani citizens -- charges Fatullayev insists were fabricated.

In the wake of the events involving the two newspapers and their editor, the Azerbaijani Service aired several roundtables on the issue of media freedom in Azerbaijan. The topic was also discussed on the service's website, by participants of an online forum on the current state of media freedom in the country (<http://www.azadliq.org/Forum/4101.html>).

The state of media freedom has been deteriorating in Azerbaijan for the last several months. According to the New-York based Committee to Protect Journalists, Azerbaijan is the leading jailer of journalists in the Caucasus, with seven journalists in prison (<http://www.azadliq.org/Article/2007/05/22/20070522125346073.html>; <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/05/f53b6b72-05ba-4abe-bf76-7c054321ad67.html>).

*** The Acting Director of RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service, Kenan Aliyev, may be reached by email at <aliyevk@rferl.org>. The Azerbaijani Service's website is at <http://www.azadses.org/>; English-language news about events in Azerbaijan can be found at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarchive/country/azerbaijan.html>*

ROMANIAN PRESIDENT, PRIME MINISTER SPEAK TO RFE/RL AHEAD OF IMPEACHMENT REFERENDUM

In the week before the May 19 referendum in which Romanians rejected the impeachment of President Traian Basescu, RFE/RL's Romania-Moldova Service aired exclusive interviews with both Basescu (May 11; http://www.europalibera.org/rubrics/ro/2007/05/0FD45EA5-95F4-48CE-8D20-5C60763D75F4_3346145.RAM) and Prime Minister Calin Popescu Tariceanu (May 15; http://www.europalibera.org/rubrics/ro/2007/05/F990DC06-C7CA-414F-A623-0191AA9C9026_3357099.RAM). Both interviews were widely quoted in the local media.

*** The Director of RFE/RL's Romania-Moldova Service, Oana Serafim, may be reached by email at <serafimo@rferl.org>. The Romania-Moldova Service's website is at <http://www.europalibera.org/>; English-language news about events in Moldova can be found at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarchive/country/moldova.html> and in Romania at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarchive/country/romania.html>*

SSALS BREAKS NEWS OF NEW MASS GRAVE

On May 2, RFE/RL's South Slavic and Albanian Languages Service aired an exclusive story about a mass grave found in Serbia containing the bodies of Albanians killed by Serbs during the conflict with NATO in 1999. The mass grave was found in a stone pit

in Majdan, a town in southern Serbia near Kosovo. A correspondent for the service spoke to a witness who reported seeing a truck loaded with dead bodies near Majdan. The service confirmed the story through a source in the office of the Serbian war-crimes prosecutor. The report was a top story for all local media (<http://www.danas.org/article/2007/05/02/1fbc0ba7-4a8d-4fca-b7dc-66dabf861d09.html>).

*** The Director of RFE/RL's South Slavic and Albanian Languages Service (SSALS), Omer Karabeg, may be reached by email at <karabego@rferl.org>. The SSALS website in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian is located at <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org>, in Albanian at <http://www.europaelire.org> and in Macedonian at <http://www.makdenes.org>; English-language news about events in Serbia and Montenegro can be found at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarchive/country/serbiaandmontenegro.html> and in Kosovo at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarchive/subregion/kosovo.html>*

RFE/RL In The News

SECOND RADIO FREE IRAQ CORRESPONDENT SLAIN

Radio Free Iraq correspondent Nazar Abdulwahid Al-Radhi was shot and killed in the southern Iraqi city of Al-Amarah on May 30. Al-Radhi is the second RFI correspondent murdered in Iraq in the past two months; Khamail Muhsin Khalaf was abducted and killed in early April. Al-Radhi had just crossed the street in front of the Al-Arusa Hotel when armed men in a pickup truck opened fire -- first on him, then on journalists gathered in front of the hotel after a journalism workshop Al-Radhi had just covered. An eyewitness said Al-Radhi was hit by four bullets and died instantly, while several of the other journalists were injured. Al-Radhi had been threatened previously because of his work for a "foreign agency" and his uncompromising stand against extremism. He was 37 years old and the father of three children.

*** The Director of RFE/RL's Radio Free Iraq, Sergey Danilochnikin, may be reached by email at <danilochkins@rferl.org>. Radio Free Iraq's website is at <http://www.iraqhurr.org/>; English-language news about events in Iraq can be found at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarchive/country/iraq.html>*

RADIO FARDA CORRESPONDENT HELD IN IRAN...

Iranian authorities are refusing to return the passport of Radio Farda correspondent Parnaz Azima, forcing her to remain in Iran against her will. Her passport was confiscated in February upon her arrival in Tehran, where she traveled to visit her ailing mother. Azima, who holds U.S. as well as Iranian citizenship, joined RFE/RL in 1998 and is based in Prague. Azima's family posted a bail bond worth approximately \$440,000 -- an amount that is unprecedented in Iranian jurisprudence. According to the spokesman for the court, Azima is charged with "acting against the Iranian state." In a May 29 interview with Radio Farda, however, Azima's lawyer disputed this, saying "The only thing Ms. Azima has been accused of is anti-establishment propaganda, and it should be noted that this is only an allegation" (for more information on the Azima case, visit http://www.rferl.org/specials/nazi_azima/).

...RADIO FARDA COVERS ARREST OF WILSON CENTER SCHOLAR

Radio Farda reported on May 9 that Iranian-American scholar Haleh Esfandiari, the director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center's Middle East Program in Washington, was arrested and taken to Tehran's Evin prison. Esfandiari had traveled to Iran in December 2006 to visit her 93-year-old mother; her passport was taken from her during a robbery while she was on her way to the airport to depart the country on December 30. Since her arrest, Radio Farda has broadcast several interviews on the case, including May 9 interviews with Lee Hamilton, the Director of the Wilson Center, and human-rights activist Emadeddin Baghi. On May 17, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi told Radio Farda that Esfandiari's arrest was illegal, and the next day Rep. Barney Frank told Farda listeners that the Iranian government's action was "absolutely outrageous" and "an act of barbarism." Radio Farda also notified listeners on May 23 that another Iranian-American citizen, Kian Tajbakhsh of the Open Society Institute, had been arrested in Iran [more information on Radio Farda programming highlights is available at the archive pages for the RFE/RL publications "Heard This Week in Iran on Radio Farda" (<http://www.rferl.org/reviews/heard.aspx>) and "Focus on Farda" (<http://www.rferl.org/reviews/farda.aspx>)].

*** The Acting Director of Radio Farda/Prague, Mossadegh Katouzian, may be reached by email at <katouzianm@rferl.org>. The Director of Radio Farda/Washington, Behruz Nikzat, may be reached by email at <nikzatb@radiofarda.com>. Radio Farda's website is at <http://www.radiofarda.com/>; English-language news about events in Iran can be found at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarchive/country/iran.html>*

RFE/RL JOURNALISTS RECOGNIZED

Several RFE/RL journalists received prestigious awards for their work in May.

- On World Press Freedom Day (May 3), the Serbian Independent Journalists Association and the American Embassy in Serbia recognized the Belgrade Bureau of RFE/RL's South Slavic and Albanian Languages Service (SSALS) for its work on "The Paulik Case," a look into the subject of human trafficking from the point of view of a 10-year old victim. U.S. Ambassador to Serbia Michael Polt was present at the ceremony. "The Paulik Case" also won first prize at Serbia's National Radio Festival in December 2006.

Text and audio of the story can be found on the SSALS website, at <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/article/2007/01/24/2bfcf5e7-08bb-4825-88eb-e96e18c9ce58.html>

- The Journalists' Union of Afghanistan cited Radio Free Afghanistan correspondent Salih Mohammad Salih for his service to the cause of free media in Afghanistan.
- RFE/RL Georgian Service Tbilisi Bureau Chief Marina Vashakmadze and correspondent Giorgi Gvakharia each received awards in May -- the International Journalists Foundation in Georgia gave Vashakmadze its "Golden Wing 2007" award, while Gvakharia won an award at the Georgian NGO Fair for his contributions to the development of civil society in Georgia.

- RFE/RL Kazakh Service correspondents Balzhan Omier and Neilya Sutlan were recognized on May 23 for their work on the Kazakh Service's youth program, "Young Wave (Jas Tolqyn)." The annual award, recognizing meritorious use of Kazakhstan's state language in the media, is sponsored by the municipal government of Almaty.
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