

DOES THE TAJIK STATE HAVE A STANCE ON ELECTRONIC MEDIA?

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Private broadcasters do not only depend on the central commission for licensing, but also largely on their relations with the local authorities.

About 20 non-state companies and one state TV company with local branches run by the Committee of TV and Radio Broadcasting are now operating in Tajikistan. The law does not provide for any public television, but *Poitaht TV*, which has been functioning in the capital for several years, can be referred to as one. The state TV channel predominates in terms of audience. The independent TV stations are spread unequally across the country. For example, some 10 stations exist in northern Tajikistan's Sughd province, one in the Khatlon province and there are none in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region. On the other hand, the independent electronic media depend on local district hukumats (administrations).

CRITICISMS DO NOT ORIGINATE FROM THE MEDIA

As per the Law On TV and Radio Broadcasting, telecasting licenses are issued by the Committee for TV and Radio Broadcasting attached to the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan. This monopolistic body is interested in conserving its monopoly in this field, which impedes journalists' careers and thwarts the country's TV development. The state TV officially performs (fully in accordance with the old Soviet-style journalistic traditions) the role of the State's ideology mouthpiece. This does not mean a lack of criticism of the electronic media. It does exist but, is not initiated by the media themselves. Critical materials only appear following some high-ranking persons' statements directing criticism towards a particular functionary. However the non-state media initiatives are given a hostile reception by the district hukumats' representatives. For example the report on the months-long deferrals in paying salaries to school teachers in the Vose District triggered a conflict between *Mavchi Ozod* station and the district hukumat.

CRACK-DOWN ON CRITICAL BROADCASTERS

A *Badakhshan* radio journalist was summoned for interrogation after his report about harassment in the armed forces. The *Guli Bodom* TV station was warned by the town prosecutor's office for not having aired a functionary's speech. There are some other examples whereby the local hukumats have made decisions after the airing of critical materials. For example, the Sughd Province's *SM-1* station investigated a case of bribery among the State Traffic Inspectorate workers. The guilty persons have been punished. In a word, the necessity to democratize social life facilitates media development and encourages journalists to be more active.