

MEDIA DEVELOPMENT: THE FUTURE OF FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN  
UZBEKISTAN

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**Annotatsiya:** *Mazkur maqolada O'zbekiston Respublikasida ommaviy axborot vositalarining rivojlanishi va so'z erkinligining hozirgi holati hamda kelajak istiqbollari tahlil qilinadi. O'zbekistonda so'z erkinligi va ommaviy axborot vositalarining rivoji davlatning siyosiy islohotlari doirasida muhim ahamiyat kasb etib, bu borada erishilgan yutuqlar va mavjud muammolar o'rganiladi. Maqolada jurnalistlarning xavfsizligi, senzura, qonuniy asoslarning shakllanishi va OAV mustaqilligini ta'minlashga qaratilgan chora-tadbirlar tahlil etiladi. Shuningdek, xalqaro tajriba va O'zbekiston OAV sohasidagi islohotlar kontekstida kelajakda so'z erkinligini rivojlantirish uchun qanday imkoniyatlar mavjudligi muhokama qilinadi. Bu tadqiqot O'zbekiston jamiyatida axborot va fikrlar erkinligining yanada rivojlanishi uchun zarur sharoitlarni yaratishga qaratilgan yechimlar haqida tushunchalar beradi.*

**Kalit so'zlar:** *Ommaviy axborot vositalari (OAV), so'z erkinligi, axborot erkinligi, O'zbekistonda jurnalistika, media islohotlari, senzura, OAV mustaqilligi, demokratik islohotlar, axborot xavfsizligi, ommaviy axborot huquqlari, xalqaro media standartlari, axborot siyosati, jurnalistlarning huquqlari, O'zbekiston jamiyati.*

**Аннотация:** *В данной статье анализируется современное состояние и дальнейшие перспективы развития средств массовой информации и свободы слова в Республике Узбекистан. В Узбекистане развитие свободы слова и средств массовой информации имеет большое значение в рамках политических реформ страны, изучаются достижения и существующие проблемы в этом направлении. В статье анализируется безопасность журналистов, цензура, формирование правовой базы и меры, направленные на обеспечение независимости СМИ. Также будут обсуждаться, какие возможности существуют для развития свободы слова в будущем в контексте международного опыта и реформ в сфере СМИ Узбекистана. Данное исследование дает представление о решениях, направленных на создание необходимых условий для дальнейшего развития информации и свободы мнений в обществе Узбекистана.*

**Ключевые слова:** *Средства массовой информации (СМИ), свобода слова, свобода информации, журналистика в Узбекистане, реформы СМИ, цензура, независимость СМИ, демократические реформы, информационная безопасность, права массовой информации, международные стандарты СМИ, информационная политика, права журналистов, О Узбекистан общество.*

**Annotation:** *This article analyzes the current state and future prospects of the development of mass media and freedom of speech in the Republic of Uzbekistan. In Uzbekistan, the development of freedom of speech and mass media is of great importance within the framework of the political reforms of the country, and the achievements and current problems in this regard are studied. The article analyzes safety of journalists, censorship, formation of legal frameworks and measures aimed at ensuring media independence. It will also discuss what opportunities exist for the development of freedom of speech in the future in the context of international experience and reforms in the mass media sector of Uzbekistan. This study provides insights into solutions aimed at creating the necessary conditions for the further development of information and freedom of opinion in the society of Uzbekistan.*

**Key words:** *Mass media (media), freedom of speech, freedom of information, journalism in Uzbekistan, media reforms, censorship, media independence, democratic reforms, information security, mass information rights, international media standards, information policy, journalists' rights, Uzbekistan society.*

The mass media (mass media) are one of the important institutions that create opportunities for information exchange, public opinion formation and participation in political processes in society. Today, the development of technology and the popularization of digital communication tools worldwide are shaping new forms of obtaining and distributing information. In particular, new media formats in the form of Internet journalism, social networks and blogging are expanding the capabilities of traditional mass media and providing the opportunity to quickly inform the population in real time. At the same time, the development of mass media in any country is directly related to issues related to freedom of speech.

This is clearly confirmed by the fact that 1,472 mass media outlets operate freely in our country and are developing steadily. It is especially noteworthy that 60 percent of them are non-state mass media. In the last three years alone, state-run TV channels such as “Culture and Education”, “Around the World”, “Navo”, “Oilaviy”, “Diyor”, “Bolajon”, “Mahalla”, “UzHD”, and non-state TV channels such as “Milliy TV”, “Uzreport TV” and “MY5” have been launched in our country. They embody important aspects of thoughts and views, and each has its own attitude and point of view on the processes taking place in the country.

The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan stipulates that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, speech and belief.

Everyone has the right to seek, receive and disseminate information of their choice. In order to improve this provision, more than 20 laws have been adopted, such as "On Mass Media", "On Guarantees and Freedom of Information", "On Principles and Guarantees of Freedom of Information", "On Protection of Journalistic Activities", "On Copyright and Related Rights", "On Telecommunications", "On Postal Communications", "On Radio Frequency Spectrum", "On Informatization", "On Advertising".

State registration and licensing of mass media, suspension or termination of their activities are being simplified from year to year, and the rights and obligations of the founder, editor and journalist are being expanded.

Freedom of speech in Uzbekistan is provided for in the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan. According to the Constitution, "everyone has the right to freedom of thought, speech and belief" (Article 33). Our Constitution, the Law "On Principles and Guarantees of Freedom of Information" guarantee everyone's right to freely seek, receive, verify, disseminate, use and store information. In accordance with the laws "On the Openness of the Activities of State Power and Administration Bodies", "On Electronic Government" and other laws adopted in recent years, state bodies and public associations must provide citizens with the opportunity to familiarize themselves with information that affects their rights and freedoms and legitimate interests.

However, freedom of access to information cannot be absolute, especially when it affects concepts such as public security, honor and dignity of people. Without restrictions, no goal can be achieved. According to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, freedom of expression may be restricted in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public order, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or other rights of a person, for preventing the dissemination of information obtained in confidence, and for ensuring the impartiality and authority of the judiciary.

As stated in the preamble to the Declaration on Basic Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Peace and International Harmony, to the Promotion of Human Rights and to Combat Racism, Apartheid and Incitement to War, "freedom of information" is a fundamental human right and a criterion for all forms of freedom that the United Nations has taken under its protection.

According to article 2 of this Declaration, freedom of opinion, expression and information, which are recognized as an integral part of human rights and fundamental freedoms, are an important factor in strengthening peace and international harmony.

It should be noted that the policy of openness and transparency is not to everyone's liking. Because during the period of authoritarian regimes, negative sentiment towards this area has become a disease that has infected many people.

However, it must be admitted that the reform of freedom of speech and openness no longer takes into account our moods and views. Because in New Uzbekistan, where this freedom is supported, as the honor and dignity of the individual are increasingly high, transparency and openness are as necessary for our people as water and air.

Therefore, public representatives of developed countries highly value freedom of speech as the circulatory system of democracy.

The use of mass media for the following purposes is prohibited:

- Calling for a forcible change in the existing constitutional system and territorial integrity of the Republic of Uzbekistan;
- Promoting war, violence and terrorism, as well as the ideas of religious extremism, separatism and fanaticism;
- Disclosing information that is a state secret or another secret protected by law;
- Distributing information that incites national, racial, ethnic or religious hatred;
- Promoting narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors, unless otherwise provided by law;

-Promoting pornography;

- it is not allowed to be used for the purpose of committing other actions that entail criminal and other liability in accordance with the law.

Article 5 of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Principles and Guarantees of Freedom of Information” states that “The main principles of freedom of information are openness and transparency, free access to information for all, and fairness.” Our current constitution recognizes the freedom of the media and the inadmissibility of censorship. At the same time, the question of who and how to ensure the implementation of these norms remains open.

The current Code of Administrative Offenses or the Criminal Code also does not provide for direct liability for violation of freedom of speech, censorship, and illegal interference in the activities of journalists. Only general liability is provided for persons who obstruct the activities of the mass media, pressure, threaten and harass journalists. Of course, the fact that the measures of influence in these articles do not directly relate to the activities of journalists also causes some negative situations in this area.

For this reason, in the process of constitutional reforms, in particular, during the nationwide discussion, appropriate additions and clarifications are being made to the article related to the activities of the mass media, based on the proposals and comments made by the general public.

In conclusion, the changes taking place in the media sector in Uzbekistan serve as an important stage in the development of freedom of speech. As a result of the legal reforms implemented in recent years and the favorable conditions created for the media, the country has become more open to the press and online publications.

Also, the increased attention of the state and the public to the media sector is playing an important role in this process. However, obstacles to freedom of speech still exist, including restrictions on coverage of certain topics, and in some cases, self-censorship. In order to further expand freedom of speech in Uzbekistan in the future, it is necessary, first of all, to further improve the legislation, ensure the safety and independence of journalists.

Also, taking public opinion into account and developing media culture are also urgent issues. In this way, the opportunity to create a truly democratic media environment in the country will increase.

Freedom of speech and the development of the media have a huge positive impact not only on journalism, but also on the development of society.

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