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Fred L. Turner, Chief of Staff



November 24, 2008

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Hon. David Bohigian, *Department of Commerce*  
Hon. Mary Beth Long, *Department of Defense*

His Excellency Ilham Aliiev  
President  
Republic of Azerbaijan  
Baku, Azerbaijan

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to express concern about recent statements by Nusravan Maharramli, head of Azerbaijan's National TV and Radio Council. He has warned that broadcasts of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty [RFE/RL] and Voice of America [VOA] on local radio frequencies will be terminated in 2009. Mr. Maharramli has justified this step by pointing to a 2002 law which restricts such frequencies to Azerbaijani broadcasters.

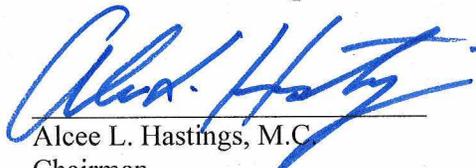
As you know, RFE/RL and VOA are Congressionally-funded. Azerbaijan's many daily listeners rely on these programs for up-to-date, objective information. Moreover, as Azerbaijan moves increasingly toward integration with the West, RFE/RL and VOA supply a model of media professionalism, as well as the sort of impartial and innovative programming Azerbaijan's citizens need to remain informed, engaged and competitive.

It is our understanding that far fewer Azerbaijanis have access to internet and satellite than to FM radio. If RFE/RL and VOA broadcasts cease on FM, millions of Azerbaijanis will no longer be able to receive these programs.

We strongly believe that would be a great loss for them. Instead of closing down FM broadcasts of RFE/RL and VOA, we would like to see Azerbaijan developing a more diverse, pluralistic media environment.

As you begin your second term and prepare to establish good working relations with President-elect Barack Obama, with the goal of strengthening U.S.-Azerbaijani relations, we believe it would send exactly the wrong signal to terminate FM broadcasts of RFE/RL and VOA in Azerbaijan. RFE/RL and VOA are invaluable to the achievement of your stated goal to build a modern, competitive and prosperous country. We hope that you will find a way for these broadcasts to continue on local frequencies, as they have done for many years.

Sincerely,

  
Alcee L. Hastings, M.C.  
Chairman

  
Benjamin L. Cardin, U.S.S.  
Co-Chairman

  
Christopher H. Smith, M.C.  
Ranking Minority Member