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INDEPENDENCE AND PLURALISM NEWS

USA: RSF condemns mass layoffs at Voice of America, threatening journalists with deportation



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Reporters Without Borders (RSF) is outraged by the dismissal of over 500 staff members at the public broadcaster Voice of America (VOA) by President Donald Trump's administration. Without a sponsoring organization, some of the VOA reporters based in the US could be forced to return to countries where they face possible arrest or worse for their journalism. RSF stands with the terminated VOA staff and is currently challenging the Trump administration's efforts to shut down the broadcaster in court.

On May 15, over 500 VOA staff members, both contractors and employees, received termination notices, indicating their contracts will end on May 23 or May 30. Once terminated, those who hold work visas will have 30 days to leave the country or find an alternative solution, such as filing for asylum or finding employment elsewhere.

Since April 8, 2025, mass layoffs and suspensions at the news outlets that depend on the US Agency for Global Media (USAGM), including VOA, have led to a severe interruption in programming, cutting off some of the only [sources of reliable information](#) in some of the world's harshest places for journalists. The cuts follow an [executive order dismantling the USAGM issued by President Trump](#) on March 14.

“While VOA employees await the decision of the en banc review in the appeals court, Donald Trump and Kari Lake have taken advantage of the slow pace of the proceedings to force through a mass termination, causing irreparable damage before the full appeals panel has had a chance to weigh in. Many of the VOA workers affected are on work visas, which will soon be terminated as a result of their being laid off. We are deeply concerned that a number of these journalists could be forced to return to authoritarian countries where they would face arrest or worse. We cannot allow that to happen. ”

Clayton Weimers
Executive Director, RSF North America

On March 21, RSF and a coalition of VOA employees and their unions [filed an emergency motion](#) with the federal court, denouncing a blatant violation of the First

Amendment. On March 28, RSF initially secured a temporary restraining order against the administration's decision and, on April 22, a federal judge [issued a preliminary injunction](#), ordering the immediate reactivation of accounts and thereby allowing VOA journalists to return to work.

On May 3, teams at VOA received notice that they would be able to resume their work. But on the same day, a court of appeal ultimately [opposed the resumption of VOA broadcasting](#) and the return to work of the VOA teams. RSF will appeal this decision.

THE AMERICAS

United States

57 / 180
Score : 65.487

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- THE AMERICAS
- United States
- Independence and pluralism
- News
- Denunciation
- President
- Press freedom