



Radio Free Asia  
Release

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## Radio Free Asia Responds to 2009 Press Freedom Index

### *Five RFA countries ranked among bottom 10*

WASHINGTON, DC – Radio Free Asia’s President Libby Liu responded to the release of Reporters Without Borders’ 2009 Press Freedom Index, saying the annual survey reaffirms the necessity of sustained broadcasting into RFA’s target countries. The index, which rated 175 countries, ranked five of Radio Free Asia’s six target countries among the bottom 10 nations.

**“Radio Free Asia’s services provide listeners with uncensored news in some of the world’s worst journalistic environments,”** said Liu. **“This year’s annual Press Freedom Index underscores the ongoing need for RFA to broadcast timely, accurate news of what is happening in Asian countries with little or no access to a free, independent media.”**

In the [survey](#), North Korea was ranked 174; Burma, 171; Laos, 169; China, 168; and Vietnam, 166. Since Reporters Without Borders began the survey in 2002, these five countries have consistently been ranked among the bottom 10 in all consecutive eight indexes.

### **Recent Highlights of RFA’s Services into These Countries**

RFA’s **Korean service** has covered the plight of defectors from North Korea and incidents of human trafficking in multipart series that have garnered international acclaim and attention. The service’s coverage of government corruption, diplomatic changes, and human rights abuses under the rule of Kim Jong Il are routinely cited by notable global news outlets.

In Burma, RFA’s **Burmese service** has recently expanded coverage on the recruitment of children into the Burmese and ethnic rebel Karen armies, and abuse of border town villagers. Last year, the Burmese service broke news of Cyclone Nargis days before the deadly storm made landfall and a full 24 hours before state-controlled media even made a passing reference of it. After the cyclone hit, the service updated listeners about health and safety information essential to Burmese listeners about rescue efforts and available water and power supplies. The service also covered events that fueled the “Saffron Revolution” in 2007 and doubled its broadcast hours after the military junta government shut down the Internet and cell phone communication to block the flow of news and information during the protests in Rangoon.

Radio Free Asia has four language services broadcasting into China – **Mandarin, Cantonese, Uyghur** and **Tibetan**. Recently, all four services have broadcast extensive coverage of the ethnic

riots in the Xinjiang region. Weeks before the flare up of violence in Urumqi on July 5, RFA was the first news service to report on the factory riot in China's Guangdong province that led to the Xinjiang riots. Last year, RFA's Tibetan service broke the story of the Chinese police crackdown in Lhasa of the Tibetan monks protest. The services also frequently report on the state of media freedom, and jailed journalists and bloggers in China.

In Laos, RFA's **Lao service** has reported on hunger issues, political corruption and the plight of Hmong refugees. RFA has also aired coverage on human trafficking of women and children in Laos. The **Vietnamese service** has aired in-depth stories on religious persecution, jailed dissenters, and government corruption, as well as providing listeners with extensive coverage of human trafficking incidents in Vietnam.

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Radio Free Asia is a private, nonprofit corporation broadcasting and publishing online news, information, and commentary in nine East Asian languages to listeners who do not have access to full and free news media. RFA's broadcasts seek to promote the rights of freedom of opinion and expression, including the freedom to "seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." RFA is funded by an annual grant from the Broadcasting Board of Governors.

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