

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 18, 2026

Michael Rigas  
Acting Chief Executive Officer  
U.S. Agency for Global Media  
330 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, D.C. 20237

Dear Mr. Rigas,

I write to express concern regarding the United States Agency for Global Media's (USAGM) failure to provide its Persian-language broadcasters, and their audiences, with full access to radio and satellite transmitters, staff funding, grants, and censorship circumvention tools at a time of urgent need in Iran.

For over two decades, Voice of America's (VOA) Persian News Network and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's (RFE/RL) Radio Farda have provided independent news and open debate that is otherwise brutally suppressed by the Iranian regime. American Presidents, Iranian opposition figures, Persian-language satirists, and officials from the Middle East have used USAGM's services as a platform to speak directly to the Iranian people and build trust. These services are also a vital national security asset: a tool to refute disinformation spread by Iranian state media and to combat hatred and antisemitism spread by the regime.

Regrettably, Kari Lake, during her unlawful tenure as acting Chief Executive Officer of USAGM, sought to dismantle VOA, RFE/RL and other essential services through firing over a thousand employees and contractors, ending broadcast services, blocking grants, closing studios, and replacing news with partisan content. Ms. Lake fired nearly 90% of VOA's employees, resulting in VOA Persian being taken off the air. When she attempted to recall a handful of staff during the 'twelve-day war' last June, the service was only able to produce a few hours of content per day during the conflict — after which Ms. Lake once again attempted to fire VOA Persian staff. Having devastated VOA Persian, according to *Status News*, Ms. Lake also blocked requests from Radio Farda to use USAGM's transmitters in Kuwait during the unprecedented mass protests — and the regime's brutal suppression — in Iran at the beginning of January. USAGM's systematic campaign to silence VOA Persian and Radio Farda has been a golden gift to the Islamic Republic and a betrayal of the Iranian people attempting to defend their human rights.

As the Iranian people once again face war and the imminent threat that the Islamic Republic will violently retaliate against domestic dissident, VOA Persian and Radio Farda are urgently needed to protect their safety, independent news, and democratic aspirations. USAGM

must immediately restore VOA staff, as ordered by the D.C. District Court. It must also ensure that its Persian-language broadcasters have every resource needed to gather vital information from inside Iran, provide safety information to civilians, and help bypass censorship. Given the widening military conflict and the Islamic Republic's escalating threats against dissidents and those providing access inside Iran, please provide the following information by March 23, 2026:

- 1.) Has USAGM ensured that VOA Persian and Radio Farda have every needed broadcasting transmission capability, including at least one channel on shortwave, medium wave, and satellite that can be received in Iran? Has it denied any requests for additional transmission capabilities and, if so, why?
- 2.) What efforts has USAGM undertaken to detect efforts by the Iranian regime to jam radio or satellite signals used by its services and diversify available satellite channels or broadcast frequencies to ensure VOA Persian and Radio Farda remain accessible?
- 3.) What steps has USAGM taken to ensure that Iranians can access VOA Persian and Radio Farda's online platforms and provide the services with on-the-ground videos and news material necessary for its reporting, including the circumvention and cybersecurity tools provided by the Open Technology Fund?
- 4.) How many full-time reporters and staff members does VOA Persian and Radio Farda currently have and how many hours of original news content do both create per day? How do those numbers compare for both organizations prior to Ms. Lake's tenure? Has it denied any requests to hire more staff at either?
- 5.) Congress intended for USAGM to be independent and objective in its reporting, however, changes made by Ms. Lake have eroded its professionalism and trustworthiness through pushing politically partisan content. What steps is USAGM taking to restore professional independence and editorial integrity at VOA Persian and Radio Farda?
- 6.) Has USAGM restored all grant funding to VOA Persian and Radio Farda, and has it denied any request for additional financial or operational resources over the past four months?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senate