News



Archbishop Borys Gudziak of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia speaks during a news conference addressing the state of affairs in war-ravaged Ukraine, on March 24, 2022, at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. (OSV News/Gregory A. Shemitz)

Gina Christian

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Journalists dismissed by the Trump administration's gutting of the federally funded Voice of America broadcaster "will not be silenced," said Metropolitan Archbishop Borys Gudziak of the Archeparchy of Philadelphia.

"We are ashamed that America is silencing its own voice," he added.

The archbishop posted a March 16 statement to his Facebook page, after the administration placed almost all 1,300 of Voice of America's staffers on leave that same day — part of a wider move to slash the funding and functions of federally operated, pro-democracy media outlets.

Two journalists from Voice of America's Ukrainian service, Ostap Yarysh and Oleksii Kovalenko, are graduates of Ukrainian Catholic University's journalism school, said Gudziak.



Signage is seen outside the Voice of America building March 16 in Washington, a day after more than 1,300 employees of the media broadcaster, which operates in almost 50 languages, were placed on leave. (OSV News/Reuters/Annabelle Gordon)

Yarysh and Kovalenko "received their termination letters during the vespers service" while visiting the university's newly inaugurated St. Gabriel Institute in Washington, said the archbishop.

Those present "embraced our brothers and prayed for all journalists who witness to the truth," Gudziak said.

Specifically, the Trump administration cuts targeted the congressionally supported U.S. Agency for Global Media, which in addition to Voice of America funds Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Radio Free Asia.

The White House said the move would "ensure that taxpayers are no longer on the hook for radical propaganda."



Signage is seen outside the Voice of America building March 16 in Washington, a day after more than 1,300 employees of the media broadcaster, which operates in almost 50 languages, were placed on leave. Metropolitan Archbishop Borys Gudziak spoke out that day about the Trump administration's shutdown of VOA, which will have an impact on graduates of Ukrainian Catholic University's journalism school. (OSV News/Reuters/Annabelle Gordon)

Launched in 1942 to combat Nazi propaganda, Voice of America, or VOA, eventually expanded to provide service in close to 50 languages. The multimedia broadcaster reached a weekly global audience of more than 354 million people with news, information and cultural programming.

In its first broadcast from New York to Germany — 79 days into the U.S.'s entrance into World War II — Voice of America announced that "the news may be good or bad. We shall tell you the truth."

Gudziak noted that "for decades repressed peoples could count on the VOA to provide accurate information about American and world affairs. Information to them denied, information forbidden."

Voice of America journalists have often paid a heavy price for their efforts, he said, noting that "several Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty journalist have already been imprisoned: Vladyslav Yesypenko — in Russia; Farid Mehralizada — in Azerbaijan; Ihar Losik — serving 15 years in Belarus."

Losik has been "detained incommunicado," said the archbishop.

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He also said that "some of the international journalists working for VOA have visas based on the contracts that have now been voided. Some of them will have 30 days to leave the country."

These include Voice of America journalists from "China, Pakistan and other authoritarian countries," who are facing "criminal charges" from their "respective regimes … precisely for working with the VOA to tell the truth," said Gudziak.

Now, he said, "What the Soviet Union could not achieve, what the Russian, Iranian, Chinese, and other authoritarian regimes could only dream about has been accomplished by the American presidential administration: the silencing of America's 83-year-old service of media support for democracy, international law and justice and the defense of human rights."

He thanked "all those who have worked at VOA until today and over the last 83 years bringing truth and hope to hundreds of millions of persecuted people, to entire captive nations."

"Such setbacks will not be permanent," said Gudziak. "Do not lose faith. Be inspired by Ukrainians who sacrifice their lives and livelihoods for freedom and justice. Do not fear! God's truth will prevail! Ostap, Oleksii and the former VOA journalists will not be silenced. Neither should … you or I!"