

Kyrgyzstan Reverses Decision to Close U.S.-Funded Media

By [AFP](#)

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Directors and technicians of Radio Azattyk working in the studio during a live TV broadcast at its bureau in Bishkek. **Vyacheslav Oseledko / AFP**

Kyrgyzstan announced Wednesday it had reversed a decision to close the local branch of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty after the U.S.-funded outlet agreed to remove a video criticized by authorities.

Award-winning Radio Azattyk is a prominent outlet in the Central Asian country that regularly reports on opposition groups and investigates alleged corruption.

"Azattyk Media removed from all its platforms a report containing unreliable information about a border conflict," the culture ministry said, referring to fighting with neighboring Tajikistan. "Legal proceedings have been halted," the statement added.

The announcement was made after a court in the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek approved a

settlement agreement between the two parties.

In January, the culture ministry said it had filed a lawsuit to shut the media organization over its refusal to remove a video about clashes last year between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan that left around 100 people dead.

In April, a court in Russia-allied Kyrgyzstan ordered the closure of the local branch of U.S.-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, which criticized the "outrageous" ruling.

Rights campaigners Amnesty International and Reporters Without Borders condemned the court ruling at the time.

The former Soviet republic enjoys relative freedom of speech compared to other countries in Central Asia, but rights groups have decried what they say is growing pressure on the press.

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