

Uzbekistan: Freedom House Becomes Latest NGO Casualty

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A civil court in Tashkent on 7 February rejected Freedom House's final appeal of a six-month suspension of its activities in Uzbekistan. It took the court only seven minutes to reach the verdict. The appeal was a final attempt by the U.S.-based organization to reverse a decision by the Uzbek Justice Ministry, which ruled that Freedom House violated laws on nongovernment organizations. Freedom House was specifically charged with providing free Internet access to Uzbeks and hosting unregistered organizations -- including human-rights defenders and political parties. As Uzbek authorities intensify their policy of squashing dissent, Freedom House says it will keep its personnel in Uzbekistan employed while awaiting the end of its six-month suspension.