



United States Mission to the OSCE
**Concern About Freedom of Expression and
Detention of Khairullo Mirsaidov
In Tajikistan**

As delivered by by Chargé d' Affaires, Michele Siders
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 12, 2018

The United States is deeply concerned by the April 5 extension of the pre-trial detention of journalist Khairullo Mirsaidov, who was arrested last December. Mr. Mirsaidov was charged with embezzlement, forgery, false reporting to police, and inciting ethnic and religious hatred soon after he publicly accused government officials of soliciting a bribe. The severe nature of the charges, and their timing, create concern that authorities are retaliating against Mr. Mirsaidov for his whistleblower activities.

This arrest reflects a pattern of increasing pressure on media freedom in Tajikistan, which has forced a number of journalists to leave the country and led to the closure of several independent media outlets. We find these trends concerning and urge Tajikistan to adhere to its OSCE commitments on freedom of expression, including for members of the media, and to its commitments under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

We urge Tajikistan to ensure that Mr. Mirsaidov's case is resolved promptly and in accordance with its obligations under the ICCPR to provide the required procedural and substantive protections in its criminal process, and to fully implement its obligations concerning freedom of expression, including by the media.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.