

Tajikistan Government Continues Repressive Policies Against Media and Journalists

Tajikistan has recently celebrated the 25th anniversary of its independence. During 25 years, the Tajik media especially in recent years has faced many problems like pressure, self-censorship and even harassment and torture.

In 18 September 2016, four days ago, Doro Suhrobi, journalist at "Faraj" newspaper, was harassed and brutally beaten to unconsciousness by 6 policemen in a custody in Dushanbe and archive card of his video camera was torn. A policeman told his colleague to search his clothes, they might find hashish from him.

Nowadays, there are at least four journalists in jails on charges of extremism:

1. **66-years old Hikmatulloh Saifullozoda**, editor-in-chief of Najot, who was sentenced to 16 years in prison;
2. **Mahmadali Hait**, a well-known journalist who was sentenced to life imprisonment;
3. **Abduqahori Davlat**, founder of news center "Panorama", former editor-in-chief of "Najot" who was succeeded by Mr. Saifullozoda. He has graduated from the State University of Tajikistan in Dushanbe with journalism.
4. **70-years old Zubaidulloh Raziq**, who had a weekly column in "Najot" and former head of the IRPT's media.

In August 2016, **Reporters Without Borders** recently in a release said: imprisoned journalist Khikmatullo Sayfullozoda is in danger of dying and must be given appropriate medical treatment as a matter of urgency.

Mr. Alizoda, Ombudsman of Tajikistan, here in OSCE conference yesterday accepted that Mr. Saifullozoda was hospitalized, but said he has no problem. We can ask how he has not problem, when he has not access to the proper medical care?

Mr. Alizoda, why were Mr. Saifullozoda, Hait, Abdulqahor and Zubaidullo Roziq sentenced to long-term imprisonment? On which basis? On basis of your false and fabricated charges? Why your government is not ready to publish the full text of their verdicts, if you have evidence?

It is worthy to note that Mr. Saifullozoda as well as Mr. Hait had been previously attacked by unknown men brutally in Dushanbe and were hospitalized. Why the government didn't yet find the attackers? Everyone knows the answer.

The Reporters Without Borders added: "Convicted at the end of a sham trial for purely political reasons, this journalist has no place being in prison."

"It is vital that the international community should put pressure on the Tajik government to end its campaign to suppress media freedom."- added the Reporters Without Borders.

Devid Keye, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression visited Tajikistan, but his request to meet political prisoners, including these journalist was rejected by the Tajik authorities. Mr. Alizoda, you say that they have no problems, why Mr. Keye was refused to meet them.

The UN Special Rapporteur following his visit to Tajikistan said: I'm afraid that the security situation has been used as a pretext, as an excuse, to crack down on freedom of expression, whether in the media or in civil society. Yes, exactly, they do this.

In the end, we call on the international community, human rights and journalist's defenders and friendly countries to pressure the government of Rahmon:

- To release all jailed journalists, including 66-years old Saifullozoda and 70-years old Zubaidullo Roziq and all political prisoners;
- To make an end to tortures and harassment of journalists as well as to blockage of the websites;
- To fully fulfill its commitments on freedom of opinion and expression.

Thank you very much