

Thank you Mr. Moderator.

Saidali Ashurov, activist of political movement “Group24”.

Ladies and gentlemen’s.

Tajikistan is a de facto one-party state. Emomali Rahmonov has ruled the country since 1992. Although opposition parties nominally exist and elections are held, the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP) dominates the political field. Although the 1994 constitution and 1999 Law on Elections provide the basis for a multiparty system, elections have been marred by irregularities and allegations of fraud. After the 2015 parliamentary election, observers from the OSCE observers concluded that the vote itself had “significant shortcomings, including multiple voting and ballot box stuffing,” repeating their conclusions in the 2010 parliamentary and 2013 presidential elections. The PDP controls the Assembly of Representatives, holding 51 seats in the 63-seat body. Following the 2015 parliamentary elections, five nominally opposition parties hold seats in the assembly. None of these parties offers substantive opposition to government policies. Two of the most vocal critics of the government—the Islamic Renaissance Party and the Social Democratic Party—no longer hold seats in the assembly after the 2015 elections. The Islamic Renaissance Party was banned and declared a “terrorist” organization by the Supreme Court in 2015. The other leading opposition movement, Group 24, was declared an “extremist” organization after calling for protests in October 2014.

At the same time as cracking down on the opposition, president Rahmonov has strengthened his executive power. In 2016, a flawed referendum approved changes to the constitution declaring Rahmonov to be “leader of the nation” and “founder of peace.” This renders him legally immune and allows him to rule indefinitely. The constitutional amendments also lowered the age limit for running for president from 35 to 30, allowing Rahmonov’s 30-year-old son, Rustam Emomali, to potentially stand in the next presidential elections in 2020.

Tajikistan’s local government bodies serve as an extension of the central government’s power. President Rahmonov appoints the governors of provinces and districts. Here are other examples:

The oldest daughter of Rahmonov, Ozoda Rahmon was appointed the chief of the presidential office in January 2016. She was a deputy foreign minister before that. In November 2016, Rahmonov appointed another daughter, Rukhshona Rahmonova, as a deputy chief of a directorate at the Foreign Ministry. In January 2017, Rahmon's eldest son, Rustam Emomali, was appointed as mayor of Dushanbe. Several other close relatives of Rahmonov’s family occupy important official positions or control lucrative businesses. This is a conclusion of democracy in the national, government level in Tajikistan.

Saidali Ashurov