

Political Movement “Group-24”

Ladies and gentlemen!

I’m Deputy head and the official representative of the Political Movement Group 24 in Sweden Husein Ashurov.

First of all, I would like to express the gratitude on behalf of the political movement Group 24 to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, that despite of the pressures from Tajikistan’s regime on OSCE’s office in Dushanbe, has given us the possibility to make reports about the current problems of Tajik people at this international event.

With regards to today’s topic freedom of the press I can say, that the media is not free in Tajikistan. The government continues to severely curtail freedom of information. The Constitution guaranteed citizens the right to freedom of expression, prohibit censorship and state interference with the media.

But in fact, journalists who write critical stories are likely to receive threats from the intelligence services, or face libel charges or even arrest. Periodically, there are made changes in the legislation limiting the activities of journalists. For example, article 137 of the Criminal Code prohibits “slandering” the president, and Article 330 prevents journalists from insulting other officials.

Khayrullo Mirsaidov a journalist was arrested in December 2017 after publishing a letter accusing a local official of soliciting a \$1,000 bribe from a comedy troupe he leads. In August 2018 he was sentenced to 12 years in jail for embezzlement and forgery, a sentence that was overturned following international pressure. Nonetheless, such cases create a climate of fear, forcing many journalists to self-censor. At least 20 independent journalists have fled the country in recent years.

The government controls most printing presses, newsprint supplies, and broadcasting facilities in the country. Tajikistan’s media licensing commission routinely denies licenses to independent outlets, or otherwise obstructs the licensing process. As the internet has gained popularity among Tajiks, and became a forum for discussing political issues, the state-run Communications Service, led by Rahmon family member Beg Zukhurov, has routinely blocked websites and social networks that broadcast criticism of the authorities. In February 2017, Prosecutor General Yusuf Rahmon reported that the government blocked over 2,000 “radical” websites in 2016. Most critical outlets- such as Akhbor, Nigoh, Payom and Ozodagon- are now based outside of the country.

Even Tajik Radio free Europe/ radio Liberty, which headed by Sojidai Mirzo is no different from Propaganda Machine of Rahmonov's regime. This radio does not cover events objectively.

Most of all, those who blocked the press and freedom of speech their photos were in front of you.

At the end we request from concern authority to give serious attention to above mentioned issues.

Thanks for your attention!