ecoi.net

25 years ecoi.net

Document #2143578

RFE/RL – Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (Author)

Tajikistan Expands Crackdown On Head Scarves, Beards In New Push For 'National Culture'

- By Farangis Najibullah and
- RFE/RL's Tajik Service

Every week, Murod opens WhatsApp, takes a selfie showing his clean-shaven face, and sends it to the police.

The 38-year-old market trader, who is Muslim and from the southern Tajik city of Bokhtar, says he has done so since spending three days in custody after police officers detained him over his beard.

"They ordered me to send them a picture every week showing that I have shaved my beard," said Murod, whose name has been changed for security reasons.

He says authorities accused him of violating public order, an administrative offense, and fined him 180 somoni ($18).

RFE/RL requested comment from police authorities over the case, but they have not responded.

Murod's experience reflects a broader trend as many Tajiks say decisions about clothing, appearance, and faith have become intertwined with official expectations.

Tajikistan, a Central Asian nation of more than 10 million, is predominantly Muslim, and Islam remains deeply rooted in society.

But in recent years authorities have introduced measures restricting clothing and other forms of appearance they deem incompatible with Tajik national culture.

Village By Village

Dushanbe's campaign against the Islamic hijab, or head scarf, culminated in 2024 when the country amended the law on "traditions and celebrations" to officially ban "clothing alien to Tajik culture," a term widely understood to describe Islamic attire.

Restrictions on the hijab were already in place at schools, universities, and government offices.

In Tajikistan, women's hijabs and men's beards are often treated by authorities as an outward sign of potential religious extremism.

Officials have repeatedly said they do not target the Islamic head scarf or curtail people's religious freedoms. But for some believers, the changes have made them more cautious about how they present themselves in public.

"When I visited a doctor last month, I was stopped at the door by a staff member and told to adjust my head scarf so that my jaw and neck were visible," Mohira, a 35-year-old resident of southern Tajikistan's Khatlon Province, told RFE/RL on July 20.

Mohira, who asked that only her first name be used because of security concerns, said she now chooses her clothing carefully whenever she visits government offices, medical facilities, or her children's school.

"I still wear my head scarf, but I choose bright colors, floral patterns, or scarves with sequins," she said.

Mohira said she avoids "plain white or black" because those colors are more likely to be seen as resembling religious clothing associated with other Muslim countries.

In May, the Women's Affairs Committee in the Rudaki district of Dushanbe's southern outskirts shared photos from its campaign titled **Village-By-Village**, which the agency said was aimed at promoting traditional Tajik clothing and discouraging foreign outfits.

The images showed officials speaking on the streets to women wearing head scarves and long, loose clothes. The post has since been deleted after it sparked an outcry on social media.

A **report** by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) in May said the government has continued its efforts to "control all aspects of Tajik religious life," citing restrictions on religious associations, clothing, education, and public worship.

The report said authorities continued enforcing the 2024 ban through campaigns discouraging clothing deemed "foreign to national culture."

It said officials visited schools in February to discuss what they described as the "imitation of foreign culture."

The Tajik government has defended its policies as efforts to preserve national traditions and prevent extremism and has repeatedly denied restricting citizens' religious freedoms.

Each Case Recorded

Unlike the hijab ban, there is no law in Tajikistan that explicitly outlaws beards. But Tajiks have told RFE/RL about men being detained for any amount of facial hair that authorities might consider a sign of religious extremism.

Two men who were stopped by police over their facial hair told RFE/RL that officers released them without charges after forcibly shaving their beards. They said they knew of other similar incidents.

In some cases, they said, authorities charged men with administrative violations such as disturbing public order or smoking in prohibited areas.

Amin, a 37-year-old Khatlon resident, said he recently had his beard "shaven dry" by police before being released with a verbal warning in front of his 6-year-old son.

"I'm not even religious. I grew a bushy beard after I started losing my hair," Amin said. "It was purely a style choice."

Speaking on condition of anonymity, an official at a passport office in Khatlon told RFE/RL that applicants with beards are routinely told to shave before receiving their documents.

"Each case is recorded, and the names are reported to higher authorities," the official said.

The official added that the information is included in monthly reports tracking men's facial hair and women's religious clothing.

Copyright (c) 2010-2020. RFE/RL, Inc. Reprinted with the permission of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 1201 Connecticut Ave., N.W. Washington DC 20036.

---

ecoi.net description:

Article on the government's crackdown against wearing headscarves and growing beards

Country:
Tajikistan

Source:
RFE/RL – Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (Author)

Published:
26 July 2026

Original link:
https://www.rferl.org/a/tajikistan-religion-crackdown-beards-hijab/33809947.html

Document type:
Media Report

Language:
English

Available on ecoi.net since:
18 August 2026

Document ID:
2143578

Austrian Red Cross

Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD)

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien

T +43 1 589 00 583

F +43 1 589 00 589

info@ecoi.net

ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.