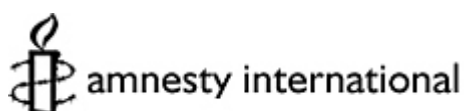


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Amnesty International Report 2010 - Tajikistan

REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN

Head of state: Emomali Rakhmon
Head of government: Okil Okilov
Death penalty: abolitionist in practice
Population: 7 million
Life expectancy: 66.4 years
Under-5 mortality (m/f): 83/74 per 1,000
Adult literacy: 99.6 per cent

The authorities failed to adequately address violence against women. Freedom of expression remained restricted. The government continued to exert tight control over the exercise of religion. Reports of torture and other ill-treatment by law enforcement officers continued.

Violence against women

Between a third and a half of women in Tajikistan have experienced physical, psychological or sexual abuse by husbands or other family members. Despite some initial steps by the government to combat domestic violence, women's access to the criminal justice system was restricted, and services to protect victims of domestic violence such as shelters and adequate alternative housing were virtually nonexistent. Women massively under-reported violence against them, fearing reprisals or because of inadequate response by the police and judiciary, resulting in virtual impunity for the perpetrators. Domestic violence was widely justified as a "family matter" by the authorities wishing to promote traditional gender roles. Women and girls were even more vulnerable to domestic violence because of early and unregistered marriages and an increased early drop-out rate from school. The draft law on protection from domestic violence, in preparation for several years, was still not presented to parliament.

Freedom of religion

The Jehovah's Witnesses remained banned across the country and members of the Sunni missionary group Jamaat-ut Tabligh came under increased pressure. In March, President Rakhmon signed a new law, making it mandatory for religious groups to register with the authorities before 1 January 2010. To obtain the registration the applicant must prove

that the group has existed in Tajikistan for at least five years. The law also states that all published or imported religious literature must be approved by the government. The Muslim community is singled out for special restrictions, with limits imposed on the number of mosques and state approval required for the appointment of imams. Cathedral mosques are only permitted in towns with more than 10,000 inhabitants. Religious organizations now require the permission of the Ministry of Culture's Religious Affairs Committee before attending religious conferences abroad or inviting foreign visitors.

- In February, the Supreme Court rejected an appeal by the Jehovah's Witnesses against their ban, declared by the government in October 2007.
- The authorities continued to close, confiscate and destroy Muslim and Christian places of worship, without explanation. In April, the Higher Economic Court rejected an appeal by the Grace Sunmin Church against the confiscation of their place of worship in the capital, Dushanbe. Compensation offered was insufficient to build another church.
- In August, the Supreme Court sentenced five members of Jamaat-ut Tabligh to between three and six years' imprisonment for "public appeals to overthrow the constitutional order". The Court claimed that the sentences were based on a 2006 alleged ban of the group as an "extremist and terrorist organization", but provided no evidence of such a ban, whose existence was disputed. The accused rejected the charges, insisting that they had no political agenda and that the movement's activities were based on the values of Sunni Islam's Hanafi school, the majority religion in Tajikistan.

Torture and ill-treatment

Reports of torture and ill-treatment by law enforcement officials continued, in particular to extract confessions in police detention during the first 72 hours, the maximum period suspects could be held without charge.

- On 27 June, Khurshed Bobokalonov, a specialist at the Tajikistani Oncology Centre, died after being arrested by the police. He had been walking along the street when police stopped him and accused him of being drunk. He protested, and some 15 policemen bundled him into a police car. The Ministry of the Interior claimed that he died of a heart attack on the way to the police station. His mother reported injuries on her son's face and body, and on 22 July the Minister of the Interior announced an investigation into possible "death through negligence". There was no public information about the progress of the investigation by the end of the year.

Freedom of expression – journalists

Independent newspapers and journalists continued to face criminal and civil law suits for criticizing the government, resulting in self-censorship of the media. In October, the government introduced a new decree obliging journalists to request, in writing, information such as laws, policies and government statements, and pay a fee of 25 Somoni (around US\$4.50) per page. The Tajikistani National Alliance of Independent Media said the decree violated the Constitution's guarantee of free access to information.

Amnesty International visit/reports

- Amnesty International representatives visited Tajikistan in July.
- Violence is not just a family matter: Women face abuse in Tajikistan (EUR 60/001/2009)

- Women and girls in Tajikistan: Facing violence, discrimination and poverty (EUR 60/002/2009)
- Remove barriers to girls' education in Tajikistan (EUR 60/005/2009)

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