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Pamiri Diaspora
Human Rights Activists

Joint Submission to the United Nations Human Rights Council

Universal Periodic Review of Tajikistan – Fourth Cycle

Assessment of Systemic Violations Against Pamiri Indigenous Minority in Tajikistan

Submitted by: Anti-Discrimination Centre Memorial Brussels in partnership with the Pamiri Diaspora Human Rights Activists

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Executive Summary

This joint submission by ADC Memorial and the Pamiri Diaspora Human Rights Activists evaluates Tajikistan's implementation of recommendations from the 3rd UPR cycle and documents ongoing, severe human rights violations, particularly affecting the Pamiri indigenous minorities in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAO/VMKB). Despite accepting recommendations on torture prevention, freedom of expression, minority rights, and protection of human rights defenders, Tajikistan has failed to implement them in practice.

Since the 2021–2022 protests in GBAO, authorities have intensified repression through arbitrary detention, torture, enforced disappearances, closed unfair trials, and transnational repression. At least 222 Pamiris remain imprisoned, including human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers, religious leaders, and civic activists. Courts have disproportionately imposed life sentences on Pamiris, and deaths in custody have increased sharply.

Civic space has collapsed. Independent media outlets have been shut down, Pamiri journalists have been imprisoned following closed trials, and Pamiri cultural and news platforms have been banned as "extremist." Internet shutdowns, digital surveillance, and reprisals against civil society actors have become routine, especially in GBAO.

Torture and ill-treatment are systematic. Documented deaths in custody—including those of Bogsho Imatshoev, Kulmamad Pallaev, Muzaffar Davlatmirov, Aslan Gulobov, Eronsho Mamadrahimov, and Sherik Karamkhudoev—illustrate a pattern of medical neglect, punitive treatment, and denial of due process.

The Pamiri indigenous minorities faces systemic discrimination, including disproportionate sentencing, targeted arrests, cultural suppression, and forced displacement. Approximately 50,000 Pamiris—one quarter of the region's population—have fled GBAO since 2022 due to escalating repression.

Tajikistan has not implemented recommendations to prevent enforced disappearances or end reprisals. Authorities continue to target relatives of activists abroad, using detention and torture as leverage to coerce return or silence. The submission calls on Tajikistan to implement UPR and treaty-body recommendations, release arbitrarily detained Pamiris, and end collective punishment of the Pamiri population.

Anti-Discrimination Centre Memorial Brussels is a human rights NGO based in Brussels that works on protection of the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities in the region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, proactively responding to human rights violations through advocacy, legal assistance, human rights education, research, and publications. Working on minority issues in Central Asia, ADC Memorial has researched the situation of Pamiris and published a number of Human Rights reports (Nationless Ethnic Groups of Tajikistan (Pamiri,

Jughi, Yaghnobi): From Non-Recognition to Discrimination (2017); The situation in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast, Tajikistan: The government shuts down internet and communications and takes other excessive measures (January 2022); Discrimination of excluded groups in Central Asia (September 2022); an alternative report to the UN CERD on Tajikistan (March 2023)); alternative report to the UN CEDAW (2024, confidential submission). ADC Memorial is in contact with the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues; as well as with the EU bodies within the Human Rights Dialogue providing them with the information about the situation of minorities in Tajikistan.

This report, as well as a number of publications among mentioned above, has been prepared in partnership with Pamiri Diaspora activists who cannot be named due to security reasons.

Civic Space and Freedom of Expression

1. During the 3rd UPR cycle, Tajikistan supported several recommendations urging it to improve the legal environment for free expression and civic participation. These included calls to strengthen guarantees for access to information and civil society activity (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, **rec. 123.67**, Costa Rica) and to enhance human-rights-related legislation more broadly (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, **rec. 123.53**, Russian Federation). Despite these commitments, the overall trajectory since 2021 has been one of accelerated restriction. Independent journalism, Pamiri-led media, and civil society organizations have faced heightened pressure, particularly in connection with events in GBAO.

2. Tajikistan also accepted recommendations to bring counter-extremism and counter-terrorism laws into line with the ICCPR (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, **rec. 123.1**, Poland; **rec. 123.46**, Mexico). Instead of narrowing overly broad definitions, the authorities have relied on these laws to criminalize legitimate human rights work, peaceful reporting and online commentary. The 2021 Act on Combating Terrorism, which replaced the 1999 law, reiterates expansive and vague definitions of terrorism found in the Criminal Code and grants wide discretionary powers to security agencies. In January 2023, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, together with other mandate holders, transmitted a communication to the Government of Tajikistan highlighting inconsistencies between the counter-terrorism framework and the country's international obligations, including the principle of legality. The communication noted that the definition of "anti-terrorist operation" is excessively broad, that terms such as "special measures" and "neutralising terrorists" appear to encourage rather than constrain the use of force, and that several provisions undermine legal accountability by shielding military, intelligence, and security actors from scrutiny and potential prosecution.

3. UN experts have warned that Tajikistan's counter-extremism framework is being used to criminalize legitimate human rights work, including against Pamiri defenders Ulfathonim Mamadshoeva, Manuchekhr Kholiknazarov, Faromuz Irgashov, and Khushom Guliam, who received sentences of 9–29 years in late 2022. The UN Special Rapporteur on minorities reported that authorities in GBAO displayed hostility toward calls for an independent inquiry into the 2021–2022 violence, labeling all detainees as terrorists or extremists and dismissing the need to investigate violations against Pamiris. The designation of Pamiri-focused outlets such as *Pamir Daily News* and *Pamir News* as "extremist" further illustrates the misuse of

counter-extremism legislation and directly contradicts Tajikistan's commitments to ensure legal clarity and non-discrimination in the application of such laws.

4. On 28 April 2023, the President signed a Decree establishing the Procedure for "burying the bodies of terrorists neutralised in the course of a counterterrorism operation," adopted in the aftermath of the 2022 crackdown in GBAO. The Procedure authorizes state bodies "determined by the organs of the initial investigation" to bury such individuals at undisclosed locations, prohibits disclosure of burial sites, and requires burial records to omit the deceased's name. Bodies must be transported in sealed coffins that may not be opened. Authorities have intensified pressure on families of those killed during the 2022 events by threatening them over gravestones and removing markers that relatives have attempted to place, further restricting their ability to mourn in accordance with cultural and religious traditions.

5. Tajikistan further supported recommendations to revise criminal legislation affecting free expression, including the removal of criminal sanctions for insulting public officials (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, **rec. 123.76**, Ireland). These provisions remain in force and continue to be used against journalists and bloggers, often in combination with extremism charges. This practice undermines the State's commitment to align national legislation with international standards on media freedom and pluralism (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, **rec. 123.78**, Italy).

6. 1. Civil society organizations have also been affected, despite recommendations urging Tajikistan to ensure that NGOs and human rights defenders can operate without fear of reprisals (**A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, rec. 123.67, Costa Rica**). Groups working on minority rights, legal aid, or documentation of abuses in GBAO have been deregistered or pressured to cease activities. Civil society space in GBAO has come under sustained pressure since late 2021, with more than 128 local NGOs persuaded or compelled to "voluntarily self-liquidate." Over 30 organizations—including those providing services to children—have suspended their activities, and more than 10 have formally self-liquidated under pressure. As a result, civil society actors operating inside Tajikistan have increasingly engaged in self-censorship, refraining from reporting on major human rights violations in GBAO due to fear of retaliation.

7. The arrest of 11 members of "Commission 44," a community-led accountability initiative, further illustrates the gap between Tajikistan's commitments and its treatment of independent civic actors. These developments contradict the recommendation to harmonize national legislation with international human rights obligations (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, **rec. 123.3**, Turkmenistan).

8. Tajikistan also supported recommendations to strengthen the national human rights institution, including improving the independence and effectiveness of the Ombudsman (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, **rec. 123.72**, Dominican Republic; **rec. 123.83**, Lithuania). However, the Ombudsman has not intervened in cases involving reprisals against journalists, internet shutdowns, or the prosecution of Pamiri civil society actors. The lack of institutional oversight has contributed to a climate of impunity and left journalists and activists without meaningful protection.

9. Finally, Tajikistan accepted recommendations to ensure that counter-extremism laws do not undermine free expression (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, **rec. 123.154**, Austria). Yet these laws continue to be used to justify internet shutdowns, mass arrests of Pamiri civil society activists, journalist and bloggers, and the banning of Pamiri media outlets. Instead of implementing its UPR commitments, Tajikistan has expanded practices that restrict civic space, particularly in GBAO. The cumulative effect is a civic environment in which Pamiri voices are marginalized, independent journalism is treated as a security threat, and public debate is severely constrained.

Tajikistan should:

- **Immediately release all individuals whose detention has been deemed arbitrary**, including those identified by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention—such as Manuchehr Kholiknazarov, Faromuz Irgashov, Ulfatkhonim Mamadshoeva, Khursand Mamadshoev, Sorbon Yunoev, Muzaffar Muborakshoev, Khushruz Jumaev, and ensure full implementation of WGAD opinions, including reparations.
- **Guarantee fair-trial rights in line with ICCPR Article 14**, including public hearings, access to independent legal counsel from the moment of detention, the exclusion of evidence obtained under torture, and the publication of court decisions, particularly in cases involving Pamiri detainees.
- **Reform counter-extremism and counter-terrorism legislation** to bring definitions and procedures into compliance with international standards on legality, necessity, and proportionality, ensuring these laws cannot be used to criminalize peaceful expression, civic activism, or Pamiri identity.

Arbitrary Detention, Torture, and Fair Trial Rights

7. During the 3rd UPR cycle, Tajikistan supported recommendations urging it to align criminal legislation with the Convention against Torture (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, **rec. 123.24**, Slovakia) and to ensure counter-extremism measures comply with the ICCPR (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, **rec. 123.1**, Poland). It also accepted calls to revise counter-extremism laws to ensure legal certainty and non-discrimination (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, **rec. 123.46**, Mexico). Despite these commitments, the authorities have used these same laws to justify mass arrests, incommunicado detention, and long sentences against Pamiris following the 2021–2022 events in GBAO. The broad and vague definitions of "extremism" and "terrorism" continue to enable arbitrary detention and discriminatory prosecution.

8. In the aftermath of the violent crackdown in May 2022—framed by the authorities as a "counter-terrorism operation"—the Tajik Interior Ministry published an initial list of 46 detained Pamiris on 24 May 2022. The list included photographs of men aged 24 to 53, several of whom appeared with visible bruising on their faces. Those arrested came from a wide range of professional and social backgrounds, including a local religious leader, athletes, teachers, a gardener, individual entrepreneurs, an architect, and students, illustrating the indiscriminate nature of the detentions.

9. As of June 2023, the Pamiri diaspora fully documented 205 cases of GBAO residents being sentenced to various prison terms during closed trials in relation to peaceful protests in GBAO. The actual number of cases as of April 2026 is believed to be approximately up to

300 as extraditions from Russia and arrests of Pamiris continued beyond 2023. Among the 205 documented cases of Pamiris 11 received life imprisonment sentences, 85 received terms of 10-29 years, and 53 received terms of 1.5-9 years. These individuals have been mostly convicted under extremism, terrorism, organised crime charges i.e., article 307 (Public calls for violent change of the constitutional order of the Republic of Tajikistan), 187 (Organization of a criminal association (criminal organization), 237 (Hooliganism), 305 (Treason against the state), 182 (Seizure of buildings, structures, means of communication and communication).

10. Tajikistan also supported recommendations to strengthen due-process guarantees and ensure fair-trial rights (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1 - Para.135, **rec. 123.135**, Australia). In practice, trials of Pamiri activists, journalists, lawyers, and religious figures have been conducted behind closed doors, with defendants denied access to independent counsel and families kept uninformed of proceedings. In the aftermath of the 2021–2022 events in GBAO, forced confessions were routinely extracted and later broadcast on state television to justify the crackdown, while GBAO residents working in state agencies, schools, and hospitals were compelled to publicly condemn protesters even as detainees remained in pre-trial detention. Many Pamiris spent months in overcrowded and inhumane pre-trial detention facilities, and the majority were transferred from GBAO to Dushanbe and other regions to serve their sentences, making family visits prohibitively difficult due to distance and economic constraints. In none of the documented cases was an alternative to pre-trial detention considered. Detainees were systematically denied access to legal representation, and only a small number were formally represented before the courts. The few lawyers who agreed to take Pamiri cases were required to sign non-disclosure agreements, preventing them from sharing information with relatives and severely limiting the possibility of appeals at the national level or engagement with international human rights mechanisms.

11. Courts have issued exceptionally harsh sentences, including **disproportionate life sentences**—14 nationwide in 2022, **10 of them against Pamiris**—indicating discriminatory application of criminal law. These practices contradict Tajikistan's commitment to bring its legislation and judicial procedures in line with international standards. Only dozens of the Pamiris among the 205 appealed the decision of the first instance court, but the conviction remained unchanged when appealing to the Supreme Court.

12. Torture and ill-treatment remain systemic, despite Tajikistan's acceptance of recommendations to prevent torture and ensure accountability (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, **rec. 123.24**, Slovakia). Former detainees consistently report beatings, electric shocks, suffocation, threats of sexual violence, and prolonged solitary confinement. Forced confessions are routinely extracted and later broadcast on state television to justify the crackdown in GBAO. These patterns demonstrate a failure to implement obligations under the Convention against Torture and contradict the State's UPR commitments to strengthen safeguards against ill-treatment. Detained Pamiri activists face continous torture in detention and are forced to confess to fabricated charges or implicate fellow activists living abroad.

13. **Deaths in custody** among Pamiri detainees illustrate the lethal consequences of torture, medical neglect, and punitive detention conditions. Documented cases in 2025 include **Bogsho Imatshoev**, **Kulmamad Pallaev**, **Muzaffar Davlatmirov**, **Aslan Gulobov**, **Eronsho Mamadrahimov**, and **Sherik Karamkhudoev**. Tajikistan supported recommendations to improve detention conditions and protect persons deprived of liberty (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1 - Para.124, **rec. 123.124**, Germany; Para.136, **rec. 123.136**, Austria), yet no independent

investigations have been conducted into these deaths.

14. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) has issued opinions recognizing multiple Pamiri detainees as victims of arbitrary detention, including **Manuchehr Kholiknazarov**, **Faromuz Irgashov**, **Khursand Mamadshoev**, **Ulfatkhonim Mamadshoeva,** and **Sorbon Yunoev**. WGAD found violations of ICCPR Articles 2, 3, 9, 14, 19, 21, and 26 and called for their immediate release and reparations. Tajikistan supported recommendations to cooperate with UN mechanisms (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, **rec. 123.6**, Uruguay), yet it has ignored WGAD's findings and continues to detain these individuals.

15. Independent monitoring of detention facilities remains impossible, despite recommendations urging Tajikistan to strengthen oversight mechanisms and ensure compliance with international standards (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1 - Para.120, **rec. 123.120**, United States of America). Human rights organizations, independent lawyers, and even families are denied access to Pamiri detainees. The national Ombudsman has not conducted credible investigations into torture allegations or deaths in custody, despite recommendations to bring the institution into compliance with the Paris Principles (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, **rec. 123.83**, Lithuania). This lack of oversight entrenches impunity and signals official tolerance of torture and arbitrary detention.

Tajikistan should:

- **Release all individuals whose detention has been found arbitrary**, including those identified by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, and establish a mechanism to implement WGAD opinions in line with Tajikistan's obligations under the ICCPR.
- **Ensure prompt, independent, and impartial investigations into all allegations of torture, ill-treatment, and deaths in custody**, including the cases of Pamiri detainees, and prosecute perpetrators regardless of rank or institutional affiliation.
- **Guarantee fair-trial rights** by ensuring public hearings, access to independent legal counsel from the moment of detention, timely disclosure of charges, and publication of court decisions, particularly in cases linked to GBAO.
- **Reform counter-extremism and counter-terrorism legislation** to bring definitions, procedures, and enforcement practices into compliance with international standards on legality, necessity, and non-discrimination, preventing their use against peaceful civic actors.
- **Allow independent monitoring of all detention facilities**, including access for international mechanisms, national NGOs, and qualified lawyers, and restore regular family visits and communication rights for detainees.
- **Improve detention conditions and medical care** by ensuring timely access to qualified healthcare, prohibiting prolonged solitary confinement, and implementing the Mandela Rules to protect the physical and psychological integrity of all persons deprived of liberty.

Indigenous Peoples' / Minority Rights and Non-Discrimination

13. During the 3rd UPR cycle, Tajikistan supported recommendations to adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, **rec. 123.47**, Montenegro; **rec. 123.94**, Canada) and to strengthen equality protections for vulnerable

groups, including ethnic and linguistic minorities (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, **rec. 123.73**, Egypt). In July 2022, Tajikistan formally adopted the **Law on Equality and Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination**, which—on paper—represented a significant legislative step. However, the law's adoption coincided with the most severe repression of the Pamiri indigenous minority in decades, raising serious concerns about the State's political will to implement anti-discrimination norms in practice.

14. The timing of the law's entry into force is particularly significant. As documented in ADC Memorial's alternative report to the **109th session of CERD**, July 2022 marked the height of the crackdown in GBAO, during which **34 peaceful demonstrators were killed**, **over 200 Pamiris were detained**, and **thousands fled the region** seeking asylum. These events unfolded **in parallel** to the adoption of the anti-discrimination law, underscoring a profound disconnect between legislative commitments and the State's actions on the ground. Rather than serving as a protective framework, the law was introduced at a moment when Pamiris were experiencing mass violations of their fundamental rights.

15. Despite adopting the anti-discrimination law, Tajikistan has not recognized Pamiris as a distinct indigenous people or ethnic, linguistic, or religious minority, nor has it introduced mechanisms to protect minority groups from targeted state action. At the 109th session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in April 2023, Tajikistan's Justice Minister, Muzaffar Ashuriyon, stated that Pamiris do not constitute a distinct minority group. This contradicts recommendations urging Tajikistan to harmonize national legislation with international human rights obligations (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, **rec. 123.3**, Turkmenistan). The absence of legal recognition enables discriminatory policing, profiling, and prosecution of Pamiris, particularly in the aftermath of the 2021–2022 events.

16. The crackdown in GBAO has had a distinctly discriminatory character. Security operations, mass arrests, and prosecutions have overwhelmingly targeted Pamiri indigenous peoples, with entire neighborhoods subjected to raids, surveillance, and collective punishment. Tajikistan supported recommendations to ensure non-discrimination in counter-extremism measures (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, **rec. 123.46**, Mexico), yet counter-extremism laws have been applied in a manner that disproportionately affects Pamiris. The high number of life sentences (11 cases) and lengthy prison terms of 10–29 years (85 cases) imposed on Pamiris in 2022 further illustrates the unequal and discriminatory application of criminal law. In March 2025, the President of Tajikistan granted amnesty to 897 prisoners; however, none of the arbitrarily detained Pamiris were included, despite repeated international appeals.

17. The dismantling of Pamiri indigenous civil society structures has further eroded minority rights. Organizations working on cultural preservation, language, and community mediation have been deregistered or pressured to cease activities. The arrest of members of

"Commission 44," a community-led accountability initiative, demonstrates the State's unwillingness to allow Pamiris to participate in public life or advocate for their rights. These actions contradict Tajikistan's acceptance of recommendations to strengthen civil society participation and equality protections (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, **rec. 123.67**, Costa Rica).

18. Large-scale displacement has further weakened the Pamiri indigenous community. Since 2022, an estimated **50,000 Pamiris**—approximately one quarter of the region's population—have left GBAO due to fear of arrest, torture, or reprisals. Many report being pressured to denounce relatives abroad or cooperate with security services. Tajikistan supported recommendations to protect vulnerable groups and reduce inequalities (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, **rec. 123.94**, Canada), yet the conditions driving Pamiris to flee their ancestral lands reflect systemic discrimination and the absence of effective protection mechanisms. Without legal recognition, institutional representation, or targeted safeguards, Pamiris cannot fully exercise their rights as an indigenous poples as well as lingistic and religious minority, and Tajikistan's UPR commitments remain unfulfilled.

Tajikistan should:

- **Ensure full and effective implementation of the 2022 Law on Equality and Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination** by adopting secondary legislation and enforcement mechanisms that explicitly protect Indigenous peoples, including Pamiris, from direct, indirect, and systemic discrimination in policing, judicial processes, and public administration.
- **Recognize Pamiris as an Indigenous people as well as linguistic and religious minorities in Tajikistan**, reflecting their distinct linguistic, cultural, historical, and territorial identity in GBAO, and incorporate this recognition into national legislation, minority-rights frameworks, and equality policies in line with UNDRIP and ICERD standards.
- **Conduct an independent investigation into the discriminatory and disproportionate use of force during the 2021–2022 security operations in GBAO**, including the killing of 40 peaceful demonstrators, over 200 arbitrary detentions, and the mass displacement of Pamiris, ensuring accountability, reparations, and guarantees of non-repetition.
- **Prevent discriminatory application of counter-extremism legislation** by introducing safeguards that prohibit profiling and collective punishment of Pamiris as an Indigenous minority group, reviewing all convictions linked to GBAO for bias, and ensuring judicial oversight consistent with international human rights law.
- **Restore and protect Pamiri Indigenous cultural, linguistic, and community institutions**, including civil society organizations, cultural associations, and local mediation structures, ensuring they can operate freely without harassment, deregistration, or criminalization, and reversing punitive measures taken against community initiatives such as Commission 44.
- **Guarantee meaningful participation of Pamiris in decision-making processes affecting GBAO**, including representation in local governance, law enforcement, and the judiciary, and ensure that development, security, and administrative policies

in the region are designed and implemented with the free, prior, and informed participation of Pamiri Indigenous communities.

Enforced Disappearances, Extraterritorial Abductions, and Transnational Repression

19. Tajikistan supported recommendations in the previous UPR cycle to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, para. 41, Rec. 123.41, Malawi/France/Japan) and to bring counter-terrorism legislation into compliance with international human rights standards (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, para. 1, Rec. 123.1, Poland; para. 46, Rec. 123.46, Mexico). Despite these commitments, enforced disappearances, incommunicado detention, and extraterritorial abductions have intensified, particularly targeting Pamiri activists, journalists, and community leaders.

20. Security operations in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAO) in 2021–2022 were accompanied by widespread reports of individuals being taken into custody without warrants, held in undisclosed locations, and denied access to lawyers or family members. ADC Memorial documents that Pamiri detainees were frequently held incommunicado, subjected to coercive interrogations, and pressured into providing televised "confessions." The report notes that "at least 34 peaceful demonstrators were killed, more than 200 were detained, and up to 1,000 Pamiris ultimately became refugees" during this period.

21. Amnesty International's 2024 report describes a pattern of transnational repression targeting Pamiri activists abroad. The report documents cases of Pamiris forcibly returned from Russia, Turkey, and other countries through informal cooperation between security services, often without due process or access to asylum procedures. Several individuals were abducted or disappeared shortly after contact with Tajik authorities, and later reappeared in Tajikistan in detention or on state television making coerced statements. Families inside Tajikistan have faced threats, surveillance, and pressure to silence relatives abroad, creating a climate of fear that extends beyond national borders.

22. Inside Tajikistan, relatives of activists have been subjected to reprisals, including arbitrary detention, house raids, confiscation of passports, and threats of criminal prosecution. Amnesty International reports that authorities have used collective punishment tactics, including detaining family members to compel activists abroad to cease public advocacy. These practices violate Tajikistan's obligations under the ICCPR and contradict UPR recommendations to ensure legal certainty, prevent arbitrary detention, and protect individuals engaging with international mechanisms.

23. The absence of independent investigations into disappearances and forced returns, combined with the lack of judicial oversight and the misuse of counter-extremism legislation, has entrenched impunity for security forces. Tajikistan has not taken steps toward ratifying the Convention on Enforced Disappearance, despite supporting recommendations to do so (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, para. 41, Rec. 123.41).

Tajikistan should:

- Ratify the **International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED)** and incorporate a legal definition of enforced disappearance into domestic legislation, ensuring criminal liability for all forms of unacknowledged detention, in line with recommendations supported in the previous UPR cycle.
- **End incommunicado detention and ensure immediate access to lawyers and family members for all detainees**, including those arrested during the 2021–2022 GBAO operations, by establishing mandatory notification procedures, public detention registers, and judicial oversight of all arrests.
- **Cease extraterritorial abductions and informal forced returns of Pamiri activists from Russia, Turkey, and other states,** and ensure that all return requests follow formal extradition procedures with full respect for the right to seek asylum and protection from refoulement.
- **Stop reprisals against relatives of activists**, including arbitrary detention, house raids, passport confiscation, and coercive interrogations, and ensure that no family member is targeted to pressure individuals abroad to cease peaceful advocacy.
- **Investigate all allegations of transnational repression,** including cases where individuals disappeared abroad and later reappeared in Tajikistan in detention or on state television, and ensure accountability for security officials involved in cross-border operations conducted without due process.
- **End culturally targeted threats against Pamiri diaspora communities,** including threats to deny the return of bodies for burial in ancestral land, and ensure that no state official uses burial practices—central to Pamiri Indigenous identity—as a tool of intimidation or coercion.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

24. Tajikistan supported recommendations in the previous UPR cycle to align national legislation with international standards guaranteeing freedom of religion or belief (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, para. 78, Rec. 123.78, Italy) and to strengthen the legal framework for freedom of expression and association, which are essential for religious practice (A/HRC/49/12/Add.1, para. 67, Rec. 123.67, Costa Rica). Despite these commitments, restrictions on religious freedom have intensified, particularly affecting Pamiri Ismaili

communities in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAO).

25. The USCIRF 2026 report identifies Tajikistan as maintaining one of the most restrictive religion laws in the region, with broad state control over religious education, clergy appointments, and community activities. The UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief observed that Tajikistan's regulatory framework "over-securitizes religious life," imposes excessive registration requirements, and restricts religious education for both adults and children. Minority religious communities, including Ismailis, face "disproportionate administrative and security pressures."

26. Community sources report that authorities obstructed mourning ceremonies following the passing of the Aga Khan IV in February 2025. Outside the two officially recognized Ismaili Centres in Dushanbe and Khorugh, authorities have banned communal prayer in private homes or informal community spaces, a practice also documented by Human Rights Watch. Community estimates indicate that two centres cannot meet the needs of approximately 30,000 Ismailis in the Dushanbe area and over 250,000 in GBAO.

27. Authorities have banned educational and cultural activities at Ismaili Centres, prohibited home-and-community based religious teachings, and seized religious education materials. Since 2022, leaders of Ismaili institutions have been replaced, prayer halls surveilled, and community communications censored. Independent religious clerics - *khalifas* have faced detention, interrogation, and fines for traditional healing practices. A respected *khalifa*, Muzaffar Davlatmirov, died in custody in June 2025 after being denied medical care.

28. Authorities have obstructed participation in global Ismaili events, monitored communications with the Imamat, and barred athletes from attending the 2025 Ismaili Games. Symbolic expressions of Ismaili identity have been restricted, including orders to remove portraits of the Aga Khan, bans on annual commemorations, erasure of mountain-side inscriptions, and censorship of community greetings. STEP teachers responsible for religious education were compelled to sign statements renouncing their teaching activities and have since been systematically denied employment. *Khalifas* are prohibited from training successors or performing traditional healing rituals. A sacred historical site in Khorog, Chorbogh, where Pamiri *khalifas* offered bayʿah to the Imam in 1995, was recently demolished.

Tajikistan should:

- **Amend the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations to bring it into full compliance with ICCPR Article 18 and Tajikistan's accepted UPR recommendations**, including removing excessive registration requirements, restrictions on religious education, and state control over clergy appointments.
- **Guarantee the right of Pamiri Ismaili communities to conduct religious ceremonies**, mourning rituals, and communal prayer by lifting bans on home-based and community-based worship, and ensuring that religious gatherings can take place without interference.
- **Restore the autonomy of Ismaili Centres and community institutions by ending prohibitions on cultural and educational activities**, ceasing the seizure of religious materials, and reversing the replacement of community leaders imposed

since 2022.

- **Ensure that independent religious clerics (khalifas) can perform their religious and cultural roles without fear of detention or reprisals**, including traditional healing practices, training of successors, and community guidance, and conduct an independent investigation into the death in custody of khalifa Muzaffar Davlatmirov.
- **End surveillance, censorship, and restrictions on symbolic expressions of Ismaili identity**, including the removal of portraits of the Aga Khan, bans on commemorations, erasure of inscriptions, and interference with communications with the Imamat, and allow Pamiri Ismailis to participate freely in global Ismaili events such as the Ismaili Games.
- **Protect Pamiri sacred and historical sites from destruction**, including sites such as Chorbogh in Khorog, and establish transparent procedures requiring community consultation before any alteration, demolition, or redevelopment of religious or culturally significant locations.

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