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Document #2139301

Amnesty International (Author)

The State of the World's Human Rights; Tajikistan 2025

A series of prisoner deaths highlighted inhumane conditions of detention, and there was near complete impunity for widespread torture and other ill-treatment. Opposition politicians, former officials and journalists were given lengthy sentences on dubious charges after unfair trials. Human rights lawyer Buzurghmehr Yorov continued serving a long sentence despite international outcry. Although “liking” critical social media posts was decriminalized, freedom of expression remained severely restricted and journalists faced prosecution. Persecution of the Pamiri minority continued. Authorities moved to expel Afghan refugees. Incidents of domestic violence increased. Lack of access to water and sanitation persisted.

Background

In February the OSCE cancelled its planned mission to observe parliamentary elections the following month. It cited a “lack of assurance by the authorities of Tajikistan that observers would be accredited and able to carry out their work”, voicing concerns about the fairness and overall integrity of the electoral process.

The economy remained heavily reliant on remittances from the diaspora, particularly labour migrants working in Russia. Although the economy continued to grow, the pace of growth slowed, declining from 8.4% in 2024 to an estimated 7.5%.

Right to life

Conditions of detention, including a lack of adequate medical treatment, apparently led to a series of deaths of prisoners. Particularly affected were those prosecuted on politically motivated grounds or sentenced

following unfair trials and who appeared to be targeted for harsher treatment.

Five Pamiri activists died in custody between January and July: Kulmamad Pallaev, Bogsho Imatshoev, Aslan Gulobov, Muzaffar Davlatmirov and Eronsho Makhmadrakhimov. No effective investigations were known to have been carried out into the circumstances of their deaths.

Zubaidullo Rozik, a dissident and former senior member of the arbitrarily banned Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan, died in prison on 24 September. He had been serving a 25-year sentence on politically motivated charges.

In October, Saidazam Rakhmonov died within a week of being arrested, presumably on suspicion of extremism or terrorism. Relatives reported signs of beating and electric burns on his body. Officials claimed he had committed suicide.

Impunity

Reported past human rights violations by members of law enforcement agencies remained unaddressed. Despite evidence of widespread ongoing torture and other ill-treatment in penitentiary institutions, including beatings, denial of necessary medical care and prolonged incommunicado detention, only one official was reported as prosecuted and convicted under torture charges during the year.

In violation of Tajikistan's obligations under the Rome Statute, the authorities failed to arrest Russian president Vladimir Putin during his visit to the country in October as per the arrest warrant issued by the ICC.

Arbitrary detention and unfair trials

Eight defendants, including prominent opposition politicians and former senior officials, were sentenced on 5 February to up to 27 years' imprisonment on charges of state treason and attempted violent seizure of power. The trial was closed to the public, and the authorities did not disclose publicly any evidence of either the defendants' guilt or of a conspiracy as such.

On 29 September, 12 international human rights organizations called on the Tajikistani authorities to release human rights lawyer Buzurghmehr Yorov, arbitrarily imprisoned since 2015 for his work. There was no official response by year's end and he continued serving his 23-year sentence.

Freedom of expression

In May, virtually "liking" online publications that "call for or justify terrorism or extremism" was decriminalized. However, freedom of

expression remained unduly restricted and public criticism of the authorities was effectively prohibited.

On 10 January, a court in the city of Kulob sentenced Ahmad Ibrohim, editor-in-chief of the independent weekly newspaper *Payk*, to 10 years and four months in prison on dubious charges of bribery, extortion and extremism. The case was classified, and the trial held inside the pretrial detention centre.

Journalist Rukhshona Khakimova was among those convicted in a closed trial by the Supreme Court on 5 February on politically motivated charges of state treason (see above). She was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment, and her bank savings were confiscated. Media reported that according to confidential sources, the prosecution was connected to her unpublished investigation into China's influence in Tajikistan.

Discrimination

Members of the Pamiri minority in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast continued to face discrimination and persecution. Their languages, cultural practices and religious identity remained restricted or denied, and their aspiration for genuine autonomy suppressed. Community leaders and activists arbitrarily detained and imprisoned in the wake of the overwhelmingly peaceful 2021–2022 protests remained behind bars and were not included in the amnesty announced by the president in March. Human rights violations by security services during the protests, including alleged extrajudicial executions, had still not been investigated.

Refugees' and migrants' rights

In July, the State Committee of National Security conducted raids targeting Afghan refugees, thousands of whom had arrived in Tajikistan in the wake of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. The authorities claimed to have uncovered various violations and threatened to deport the refugees. Some refugees received anonymous SMS messages instructing them to leave Tajikistan within 15 days. In several instances, entire families were taken away and likely forcibly returned to Afghanistan.

Violence against women and girls

Domestic violence and forced and early marriages persisted. Official statistics recorded an increase of some 15% in the number of cases of domestic violence against women and girls in the first six months of 2025 compared to the previous year.

Domestic violence was not criminalized as a distinct type of crime, which made justice and remedies less accessible to survivors.

Many shelters for victims of domestic violence were heavily dependent on foreign assistance and were reportedly negatively impacted by the closure of USAID-funded programmes.

Right to water

The authorities adopted a plan to invest approximately USD 300 million to improve access to clean water. Most of the money was expected to come from international donors.

According to official data, 59% of the population had no access to centralized plumbing systems, and 8% had no access to local water sources at all. The situation was particularly bad in rural areas, where 76% of people lacked a centralized water supply. Moreover, 85% of the population, including virtually everyone in rural areas, had no sewage systems.

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ecoi.net description:

Report on the human rights situation (covering 2025)

Country:
Tajikistan

Source:
Amnesty International (Author)

Published:
21 April 2026

Original link:
https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/europe-and-central-asia/eastern-europe-and-central-asia/tajikistan/report-tajikistan/

Document type:
Periodical Report

Language:
English

Available on ecoi.net since:

21 April 2026

Document ID:
2139301

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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.