

2. Taiwan: Amnesty International condemns the execution of five people (ASA 38/002/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA38/002/2014/en
3. Taiwan government must ensure the reform of military criminal procedure legislation lives up to its promise of greater accountability (ASA 38/001/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA38/001/2014/en

TAJIKISTAN

Republic of Tajikistan

Head of state: **Emomali Rahmon**

Head of government: **Qokhir Rasulzoda**

Torture and other ill-treatment of detainees remained pervasive and impunity for crimes of torture continued. The government imposed further restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

BACKGROUND

Emomali Rahmon was re-elected as President for a fourth term in November 2013 with 84.32% of the vote.

In May, three people were killed and five injured when a police operation in Khorog, Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAO), led to clashes between security forces and residents. An investigation into the incident was reported to be ongoing at the end of the year. There was still no effective investigation into the clashes in Khorog in July 2012, in which dozens of people and at least 22 civilians were killed. Reliable information about the number of victims was still lacking.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Torture and other ill-treatment remained widespread despite the adoption of an Action Plan to implement recommendations by the UN Committee against Torture in 2013.

Tajikistani NGOs documented 24 cases of torture between 1 December 2013 and 8

October 2014. However, most relatives and victims declined to pursue complaints for fear of reprisals. Many more cases of torture were likely to have gone unreported.

Criminal prosecutions against law enforcement officials suspected of torture were rare, and frequently terminated or suspended before completion. By the end of the year, only four security officers had been convicted of torture since its criminalization in 2012. Two of them were given suspended sentences.

In April, the investigation into allegations involving two officials suspected of torturing Ismonboy Boboev (who died in custody in February 2010) was suspended again, reportedly due to the poor health of one of the suspects.

Tajikistan failed to implement decisions by UN bodies on individual cases. In June 2013, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention urged the release of Ilhom Ismonov, who had been arbitrarily detained, tortured and forced to sign a false confession in November 2010. He remained in detention at the end of the year.

Lawyers were repeatedly denied access to their clients in detention, often for days at a time. This was particularly common in facilities run by the State Committee for National Security.

Individuals perceived to be threats to national security, including members of religious movements and Islamist groups or parties, were at particular risk of incommunicado detention, torture and other ill-treatment.

Umed Tojiev, a member of the opposition Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), died in hospital on 19 January. He had been arrested by police on 30 October 2013 in Sughd region, and charged on 4 November 2013 with organizing a criminal group, but was denied access to his lawyer until 13 November 2013. His family claimed he was subjected to suffocation, sleep and food deprivation and electric shocks. He jumped out of the Sughd police station window on 5

November 2013, breaking both his legs, but was not provided with adequate medical care until 4 January. His death, suspected to be due to criminal negligence, was still under investigation at the end of the year.

PRISON CONDITIONS

In February a monitoring group on detention facilities established by the Human Rights Ombudsman began its work. The group included civil society representatives.

However, in some cases NGO representatives were arbitrarily denied access to detention facilities.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Politicians, civil society activists and journalists were harassed for criticizing the government.

In 2013-2014, some 15 lawsuits were brought against journalists and media outlets, including on charges of defamation and, in one case, criminal fraud.

In February, journalist Olga Tutubalina and newspaper *Asia Plus* were ordered by a court to pay TJS 30,000 (US\$6,300) in damages to three plaintiffs for their “physical and mental suffering” in connection with an article published in 2013 which spoke unfavourably of the “intelligentsia” and in which none of the plaintiffs was mentioned.

Access to dozens of popular internet resources, including news websites and social media, was temporarily blocked on multiple occasions during the year. Reportedly, internet providers did so under direct orders from the state regulator Communications Service.

Reports abounded of politically motivated harassment of opposition political leaders. IRP members were particularly targeted. In July 2013 the UN Human Rights Committee expressed concern about the detention of Zayd Saidov, the leader of the opposition movement New Tajikistan. He was sentenced in December 2013 to 26 years in prison. In October 2014, the Supreme Court banned

the Group 24 opposition movement, declaring it “extremist”.

On 16 June, Alexander Sodiqov, a Tajikistani national studying for a PhD in Canada, was detained in Khorog while interviewing the deputy head of the opposition Social Democratic party of GBAO as part of his research on post-conflict. He was accused of spying and remained incommunicado for three days. On 19 June, the head of the State Committee for National Security, Saimumin Yatimov, stated in a thinly veiled reference to his case, that foreign spies were operating in Tajikistan under the guise of NGOs and trying to undermine national security. Alexander Sodiqov was a prisoner of conscience. He was released on bail on 22 July and allowed to travel to Canada on 10 September to continue his studies.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Human rights and other NGOs continued to operate in an insecure environment and faced pressure from the authorities. Unscheduled inspections of NGOs increased, sometimes followed by legal actions for alleged infringements of the law.

On 24 June, the Constitutional Court considered a submission by the Association of Young Lawyers “Amparo” regarding discrepancies between the law “On Public Associations” and the Constitution. The Court concluded that the law lacked clarity on the grounds for closure of associations and recommended that it be amended by parliament. Amparo had been closed down by the authorities in October 2012 for a minor technical transgression. Its appeals against this decision were unsuccessful.