

URGENT ACTION

ACADEMIC HELD ON POLITICALLY MOTIVATED CHARGES

Alexander Sodiqov, a PhD student who has been held incommunicado since 16 June, has been transferred to a detention facility in Dushanbe, the capital. Some media reports claim that he has been charged with “high treason”.

According to media reports, on 20 June the State Committee for National Security (SCNS) issued a public statement saying that **Alexander Sodiqov** is currently being held in the SCNS facility in Dushanbe. His arrest was reportedly sanctioned by a judge at the Ismoil-Somoni Court in Dushanbe. Reports from 23 June indicate that he is being held in connection with investigations for “high treason” under Article 305 of the Criminal Code (punishable by from 12 to 20 years imprisonment). Amnesty International believes Alexander Sodiqov is a prisoner of conscience who is detained for exercising his right to freedom of expression, as he was undertaking legitimate academic research which was to lead to publication for public information.

Alexander Sodiqov's family have not been able to visit him in the SCNS detention facility in Dushanbe. He has also not been able to see the defence lawyers of his choice but the Tajikistani authorities announced that he has seen a state appointed lawyer.

Alexander Sodiqov, resident in Canada, was detained on 16 June by two security officials in Khorogh, capital of eastern Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO). On 17 June police went into his mother's home in Dushanbe, searched it and removed computer and storage equipment. On 17 June the SCNS issued a statement accusing him of spying for foreign governments.

Please write immediately in Tajik, Russian, English or your own language:

- Urging the Tajikistani authorities to immediately and unconditionally release prisoner of conscience, Alexander Sodiqov;
- Urging the authorities to ensure that Alexander Sodiqov immediately has unrestricted and confidential access to a lawyer of his choice in line with Tajikistan's national law and international obligations and that he is allowed to see his family and receive any medical attention he may require;
- Urging the authorities to ensure that Alexander Sodiqov is not subjected to torture or other ill-treatment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 6 AUGUST 2014 TO:

President

Emomali Rahmon
80 Rudaki Street
Dushanbe 734023
Tajikistan
Fax: +992 372 21 68 00
Email: mail@president.tj

Salutation: Dear President Rahmon

Prosecutor General

Sherkhon Salimzoda
126, A. Sino Avenue
Dushanbe 734043, Tajikistan
(Mark faxes and emails, “Please forward to Prosecutor General”)
Fax: +992 372 21 02 59
Email: info@mfa.tj

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

And copies to:

Chairman, State Committee for National Security
Saimymin Yatimov
Ministry of Security
Ul Gorkogo 8
734025 Dushanbe
Tajikistan
Fax: +992 372 21 23 12

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 157/14. Further information:
<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR60/003/2014/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Alexander Sodiqov is a PhD student at the University of Toronto, Canada. He had been conducting research for a British Economic and Social Research Council project called Rising Powers and Conflict Management in Central Asia led by the universities of Exeter and Newcastle. He was detained while conducting a research interview with the deputy head of the opposition Social Democratic Party of GBAO, Alim Sherzamonov. According to Asia Plus and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Alexander Sodiqov appeared on local television in Badakhshan on the evening of 18 June and the following morning talking about the situation in GBAO. Radio Free Europe's reports said that some observers felt the television footage had been edited. On 19 June the head of the SCNS, Saimumin Yatimov, made a statement saying that foreign spies were operating in Tajikistan under the guise of NGOs and trying to undermine safety and security in the country.

Gorno-Badakhshan is an autonomous province in eastern Tajikistan, bordering Afghanistan. It is home to only three percent of Tajikistan's population, most of whom are followers of Ismailism, a branch of Shi'ite Islam, while the rest of the Tajikistani population mainly consider themselves Sunni Muslims. Tensions between the authorities in Dushanbe and opposition political groups and local militants in GBAO have flared in the last couple of years.

In July 2012, dozens of people including civilians, are believed to have been killed and injured in clashes between government forces and local militants in GBAO following the fatal stabbing of a security official.

Clashes on 21 May 2014 in Khorog, GBAO, left at least three people dead, including a police officer, and seven people injured. The fatalities took place during a police operation against suspected criminals and led to clashes between the security forces and local residents. On 24 May, one person was killed and two injured when protesters attacked a building of the security forces in Khorogh. Protesters left the central square in Khorogh on 26 May.

Amnesty International has documented cases from Tajikistan which suggest that people detained in SNCS facilities are at particular risk of human rights violations; including torture and other ill-treatment and that access to lawyers of their own choice is often denied.

Name: Alexander Sodiqov

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 157/14 Index: EUR 60/004/2014 Issue Date: 25 June 2014