



Committee to Protect Journalists

Submission by the Committee to Protect Journalists

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Tajikistan

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Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ): CPJ is an independent, non-profit organization that promotes press freedom worldwide. Europe and Central Asia program coordinator, Gulnoza Said, +1 917 741 6255, gsaid@cpj.org.

Introduction

1. As an international organization promoting press freedom, CPJ's submission focuses on Tajikistan's compliance with international human rights obligations related to freedom of the press, and on developments since the last review in 2021. The submission identifies a significant deterioration of press freedom during this period, including a wave of imprisonments of journalists and an intensification of already pervasive media self-censorship.
2. In particular, concerns raised in this submission relate to:
 - Intimidation of the press, restriction of access to information
 - Imprisonment of journalists
 - Misuse of counter-extremism and counter-terrorism legislation
 - Enforced disappearance
 - Torture and ill-treatment
 - Violations of the right to a fair trial
 - Transnational repression of exiled journalists

Implementation of recommendations from the previous review

3. From the previous Universal Periodic Review (UPR), 55 recommendations relevant to press freedom are assessed as “not implemented”; 3 are assessed as “partially implemented.” Our commentary on individual recommendations is in Appendix 1.

Update on the situation for media freedom since the last review

General observations

4. The period since Tajikistan’s last UPR in 2021 has seen a significant degradation of press freedom and journalists’ ability to report freely and without fear. Tajikistan already had one of the world’s most restrictive environments for media, but the current review period has seen a steep deterioration, conditioned by a violent government crackdown on protests by the Pamiri ethnic minority in the eastern Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAO), as well as by efforts to consolidate power ahead of an expected transition from President Emomali Rahmon to his son.
5. Among other steps taken to repress the press, authorities sentenced nine prominent journalists to lengthy prison terms of up to 20 years, making Tajikistan the world’s 10th worst jailer of journalists as of 2025.¹ During a 2023 CPJ mission to Tajikistan, journalists said the climate of fear and self-censorship meant media were at their lowest point since the civil war in the 1990s.² The domestic crackdown has been accompanied by an increase in transnational repression (TNR) of Tajik journalists in exile.

Specific issues of concern

Intimidation of the press, restriction of access to information

6. Despite calls during the last UPR for Tajikistan to ensure media freedom,³ in the current review period government actions have entrenched a climate of fear, significantly exacerbated self-censorship among journalists, and reduced access to information.⁴
7. On May 17, 2022, the day after authorities began a crackdown on Pamiri protests in GBAO, Tajikistan’s leading domestic independent news outlet Asia-Plus said it was stopping its coverage of events in GBAO after receiving an official warning from Tajikistan’s Prosecutor-General, threatening it with closure for alleged “one-sided” coverage and “destabilizing the situation in the country.”⁵ Other independent media unofficially received similar warnings of “consequences” for publishing anything but official government information on the protests.⁶ As a result, domestic media either avoided coverage of developments in GBAO entirely or published only official information. The only media that continued to report independently on the protests were exiled Tajik media, U.S. Congress-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty’s (RFE/RL) Tajik service, which is Czechia-based but

maintains a team of in-country journalists, and RFE/RL's Russian-language broadcaster, Current Time TV.

8. Also on May 17, four correspondents for RFE/RL and Current Time TV were attacked in two separate incidents in Dushanbe, shortly after recording interviews with well-known Pamiri journalist and rights defender Ulfatkhonim Mamadshoeva. Unidentified attackers assaulted two of the journalists and stole equipment and interview footage. The journalists told CPJ they believed their attackers were law enforcement officers seeking to prevent the interviews being broadcast.⁷ To date, authorities have not held any perpetrators to account.
9. On May 18, officers from Tajikistan's State Committee for National Security (SCNS) arrested Mamadshoeva on accusations of organizing the GBAO protests. The following day, SCNS officers arrested Pamiri journalist Khushruz Jumayev on similar allegations. Other journalists, including Pamiri journalist Ramziya Mirzobekova who had covered previous protests in GBAO, were interrogated, had their devices confiscated, and were subject to threats of arrest and retaliation published on social media accounts believed to be run by the SCNS.⁸ No evidence has been presented to suggest these journalists had any connection to the protests.
10. In June and July, authorities arrested four Tajik journalists who did not cover events in GBAO, in an apparent effort to exert a wider chilling effect. The six journalists detained between May and July were sentenced to lengthy prison terms (see 17-26).
11. Between May and late June 2022, authorities effectively imposed an information blockade on GBAO, cutting the region's internet and intimidating journalists to stop them traveling to the region. This followed an earlier internet shutdown in GBAO between November 2021 and March 2022.⁹
12. In August 2022, RFE/RL wrote to President Rahmon complaining of a "wave of harassment and intimidation" of its staff and their family members since May.¹⁰
13. CPJ is aware of multiple cases of journalists fleeing Tajikistan since 2022 for fear of arrest in connection with their work.
14. In July 2023, Tajikistan banned exile-based Pamir Daily News, the most prominent independent media focused on GBAO, as an "extremist organization."¹¹ In 2024, Tajik authorities announced criminal charges against exile-based Pamiri journalist Anora Sarkorova, whose Telegram channel was another source of original reporting on GBAO. Sarkorova and other exiled journalists have reported harassment of their families in Tajikistan since 2022 (see 45, 47).

15. As a result of state-led intimidation, local journalists reported increased self-censorship, saying the range of “sensitive” topics to avoid had expanded and journalists were increasingly leaving the profession or suffering from “demoralization.”¹²
16. Pernicious legislation and anti-media practices continued, counter to the previous UPR’s recommendations. RFE/RL and Asia-Plus continued to face intermittent and unexplained blocks; several exiled media are permanently blocked. SCNS “curators” maintain contact with independent media outlets to let them know they are being watched. The authorities use a range of levers to exert pressure on media, from threatening rigged tax inspections to ordering advertisers to pull their adverts.¹³

Imprisonment of journalists

17. At the previous UPR, several states called on Tajikistan to cease reprisals and to release journalists imprisoned on political grounds. During that UPR cycle, two journalists had been jailed on criminal charges for periods up to one year.¹⁴ During the current cycle, nine journalists have been sentenced to prison terms of between seven and 20 years.
18. On May 18, 2022, SCNS officers arrested Mamadshoeva on allegations of organizing mass protests in GBAO.¹⁵ Shortly before her arrest, Mamadshoeva told journalists the allegations were absurd.¹⁶ Following her arrest, state TV broadcast a documentary, “Failure of the Conspiracy,” in which Mamadshoeva, in SCNS custody, admitted to organizing the protests alongside members of Tajikistan’s exiled opposition. The documentary used CCTV footage from a meeting between Mamadshoeva and U.S. embassy staff in a Dushanbe café to allege she received instructions to foment the protests from Western diplomats. A U.S. Embassy spokesperson described the allegations as “absolutely false.”¹⁷
19. On December 9, 2022, Mamadshoeva was sentenced to 20 years in prison on 10 charges, including treason, terrorism, violent usurpation of state power, and murder.¹⁸ The case against her and around 30 other defendants was declared secret and held behind closed doors, making it impossible to independently fully assess it. Aged 69, she faces another 16 years in prison while suffering from health issues including hypertension.
20. In July 2023, UNHRC special procedures experts expressed concern about the convictions of Mamadshoeva and five other journalists (Jumayev, see 22; Daler Bobiev and Ghurbatov, see 23-24; Zavqibek Solehov and Abdusattor Kotibov, see 25-26) imprisoned in Tajikistan in 2022, citing the “apparent use of antiterrorism legislation to silence critical voices.” The experts said the cases appeared to have “grossly violated” fair trial standards, and were “appalled” by reports journalists were “ill-treated and tortured, including to extract false confessions.”¹⁹

21. In March 2024, the U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UNWGAD) concluded that Mamadshoeva's detention was arbitrary and urged her release.²⁰ No measures have been taken by Tajik authorities to comply.
22. On May 18, 2022, police arrested journalist Khushruz Jumayev, who ran culture and current affairs website Pomere.info and collaborated with Mamadshoeva on several projects (see 9).²¹ Jumayev's relatives searched for him for five days before authorities informed them he was detained. Jumayev was reportedly deprived of access to a lawyer and subjected to severe physical abuse, including by electric shock. He has since undergone surgery, allegedly for related injuries. In December 2022, authorities sentenced Jumayev to eight years in prison on charges of membership of a criminal group.²²
23. On June 15, 2022, police arrested Daler Bobiev, an independent journalist who ran a YouTube channel covering social issues and alleged abuses by municipal authorities. The channel was growing in popularity, with 150,000 subscribers at the time of Bobiev's arrest. Also on June 15, police arrested Avazmad Ghurbatov, an award-winning documentary filmmaker who worked as Bobiev's camera operator. Authorities accused Bobiev and Ghurbatov of membership of Europe-based political opposition groups that are banned as extremist in Tajikistan but widely recognized internationally as peaceful. Both denied the charges.²³
24. In October 2022, closed courts sentenced Bobiev to 10 years and Ghurbatov to 7.5 years in prison on charges including membership of banned groups. The Prosecutor General's office justified Ghurbatov's charge by alleging he "discredited" government policies on Facebook, citing a post which said Tajikistan was a country "without laws, without government, without leadership."²⁴
25. On July 8-9, 2022, police arrested journalists Zavqibek Solehov and Abdusattor Kotibov, who had called for Bobiev and Ghurbatov's release. The pair's whereabouts were unknown for around a week until authorities confirmed their detention. Kotibov alleged that police beat, electrocuted, and threatened him into recording a confession video.²⁵
26. In November and December 2022, closed courts sentenced Solehov and Kotibov to seven years in prison for alleged membership of Europe-based opposition groups. Both denied the charges.
27. On March 6, 2023, SCNS officers detained Khurshed Fozilov, an independent journalist who reported on social issues and allegations of mismanagement by local authorities. Fozilov was not permitted to speak to his lawyer until almost a week after his arrest and was allegedly beaten and threatened with violence to obtain a confession.²⁶

28. On May 26, 2023, Fozilov was sentenced to seven years in prison for participating in banned extremist organizations. No further details about the charges were officially made public. Fozilov's family said he was convicted for sending information to exiled news website Akhbor, but said he had not done so since the outlet was banned in 2020.²⁷ Fozilov denied the charges.
29. On August 12, 2024, police arrested Ahmad Ibrohim, chief editor of Payk newspaper, the best known of Tajikistan's few independent regional media. In January 2025, Ibrohim was sentenced to 10 years in prison on highly dubious charges of bribery, extortion, and extremism, which he denied.²⁸
30. On February 5, 2025, authorities sentenced prize-winning freelance journalist Rukhshona Hakimova to eight years in prison on treason charges. Hakimova was convicted as part of a trial against leading opposition politicians, including her uncle, over an alleged plot – widely believed to be fabricated – to seize power. The case was classified secret; some reports say she was convicted over a survey she conducted for a Western NGO into China's growing influence in Tajikistan.²⁹ She denied the charges.

Misuse of counter-extremism and counter-terrorism legislation

31. At the previous UPR, several countries urged Tajikistan to bring counter-extremism and counterterrorism legislation into compliance with international law.³⁰ During the current cycle, eight of the nine imprisoned journalists were convicted on charges of extremism or terrorism.
32. While the secrecy under which authorities have prosecuted these cases means there is little official information, all evidence suggests counter-extremism and counterterrorism legislation has been misused to crack down on legitimate activities and protected speech. Evidence includes an official statement on allegations against Ghurbatov (see 24); journalists' or relatives' public statements; UNWGAD's ruling; and strong circumstantial evidence that the charges were retaliatory.³¹

Enforced disappearance

33. During the previous UPR, several states called on Tajikistan to strengthen measures to prevent enforced disappearance.³²
34. In the cases listed above, Solehov and Kotibov (25-26) were subjected to enforced disappearances of around a week, and Jumayev five days (22).

Torture and ill-treatment

35. Despite concerns raised during the previous UPR,³³ allegations of torture and ill-treatment have featured in most cases cited in this submission.

36. In an October 2022 letter from prison, Kotibov wrote that police beat and electrocuted him, and forced him to record a false confession, mistreatment so extreme he thought he would die.³⁴ Jumayev was subjected to physical ill-treatment and electrocution and later underwent surgery (see 22).³⁵ Fozilov's family alleged that SCNS officers beat him and would have "maimed" him had he not confessed.³⁶ Bobiev said he had been forced to make a false confession, citing threats of violence against his wife and mother.³⁷ At trial, Mamadshoeva said her televised confession was made under duress. Ghurbatov was also reportedly pressured into recording a false confession.³⁸
37. Authorities said an investigation by the Prosecutor's Office found no evidence Kotibov was tortured; the journalist's relatives dismissed the investigation as not independent.³⁹

Violations of the right to a fair trial⁴⁰

38. As UN experts highlighted in 2023, available evidence suggests fair trial standards have been grossly violated in journalist prosecutions during the review period.
39. All nine currently imprisoned journalists were convicted in trials conducted in unwarranted secrecy. Cases against Mamadshoeva, Jumayev, Bobiev, and Hakimova were classified secret, and all nine trials were closed doors with lawyers made to sign non-disclosure agreements.⁴¹
40. Due to case secrecy, CPJ was unable to establish the extent to which courts admitted evidence obtained under torture or psychological pressure.

Transnational repression of exiled journalists⁴²

41. The last UPR recommended that the government end TNR of human rights defenders and members of civil society and stop targeting their family members. However, in the current review period TNR proliferated.
42. In February 2023, media reported that Tajik authorities charged Czechia-based Pamiri journalist Rustam Djoniev with mercenarism and calling for the violent change of the constitutional order, in apparent reprisal for his social media commentary on the repression of Pamiris.⁴³
43. In February 2024, Tajikistan's minister of internal affairs confirmed an unspecified criminal case had been brought against Czechia-based Sarkorova (see 14). Sarkorova told CPJ she was informed that she was charged with promoting or justifying extremism.⁴⁴
44. Also in February 2024, CPJ identified the names of 12 Tajik journalists in a Russian internal affairs ministry database of wanted individuals, published by Russian media.⁴⁵ Journalists listed said the only possible explanation for them being on the list was a request from the Tajik government.

45. In June 2022, at the height of the crackdown in GBAO that Sarkorova was documenting, law enforcement officers repeatedly detained, questioned and threatened her relatives to get her to stop. Sarkorova told CPJ she was threatened by social media accounts she believed were linked to the authorities.⁴⁶
46. In 2023-24, Shavkat Sharipov, head of broadcasting at Payom, alleged that Tajik authorities extradited his brother from Russia and sentenced him to 12 years in prison on extremism charges in order to pressure Sharipov.⁴⁷
47. In May 2024, CPJ reported on the intensification of Tajik authorities' years-long harassment of relatives of five journalists of Europe-based Azda TV, who were repeatedly summoned and pressured, and on some occasions detained and beaten, to persuade the journalists to cease their work them.⁴⁸

Recommendations to the government of Tajikistan

48. Implement all recommendations on media freedom from the previous cycle.⁴⁹

Intimidation of independent media, restrictions on access to information

49. Cease all efforts to stop independent media operating freely.
50. End the practices of banning media outlets, blocking their websites, threatening them with closure over legitimate reporting, and using state "curators" to informally pressure independent media.

Imprisonment of journalists

51. Fully comply with the requests of UN treaty organizations and special procedures groups regarding cases of detained journalists, including the UNWGAD's request to release Ulfatkhonim Mamadshoeva.
52. Conduct transparent reviews of the cases of all nine imprisoned journalists covered in this submission and release those wrongly detained.
53. Cease prosecuting and jailing journalists in reprisal for their work.

Misuse of counter-extremism and counter-terrorism legislation

54. Stop misusing counter-extremism and counterterrorism legislation to target members of the press.

Torture and ill-treatment

55. End the practice of subjecting journalists to torture, ill-treatment, threats and psychological pressure, including to obtain false confessions.
56. Ensure that all allegations of torture and abuse raised in this submission are fully and transparently investigated.

Violations of the right to a fair trial

57. End the practices of trying journalists in secrecy in closed courts, requiring lawyers to sign non-disclosure agreements, and intimidating lawyers and relatives of jailed journalists into silence.
58. Ensure that journalists' right to a fair trial is observed.

Transnational repression of exiled journalists

59. End the TNR of exiled journalists, including in absentia prosecutions and the harassment of relatives in Tajikistan.

References

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- ¹ <https://cpj.org/special-reports/2025-journalist-jailings-remain-stubbornly-high-harsh-prison-conditions-pervasive/>
 - ² <https://cpj.org/2024/01/in-tajikistan-independent-media-throttled-by-state-repression/>
 - ³ The OHCHR report for Tajikistan's previous UPR cycle cited "extensive self-censorship and fear" and a continued deterioration in enjoyment of the right to freedom of expression and access to information. Multiple state recommendations called on the authorities to take steps to ensure media freedom, media pluralism, and access to information, including by reforming problematic legislation to bring it into line with international norms.
 - ⁴ Notably, of more than a dozen journalists and press freedom advocates interviewed during CPJ's mission, only two agreed to speak on record, due to fear of reprisal. <https://cpj.org/2024/01/in-tajikistan-independent-media-throttled-by-state-repression/>
 - ⁵ <https://cpj.org/2022/05/tajikistan-outlet-threatened-with-closure-4-journalists-attacked-during-unrest-coverage/>; <https://asiaplus.news/2022/05/17/zayavlenie-redakczii-aziya-plyus-o-situaczii-v-gbao/>
 - ⁶ <https://www.azattyqasia.org/a/31865912.html>
 - ⁷ <https://cpj.org/2022/05/tajikistan-outlet-threatened-with-closure-4-journalists-attacked-during-unrest-coverage/>
 - ⁸ <https://mediazona.ca/news/2022/05/26/journalist>
 - ⁹ <https://cpj.org/2022/05/tajikistan-outlet-threatened-with-closure-4-journalists-attacked-during-unrest-coverage/>; <https://thediplomat.com/2022/06/tajikistan-lifts-internet-block-on-gbao-whats-next/>.
 - ¹⁰ [08790000-0a00-0242-bf96-08da8b6107a3.pdf](https://cpj.org/2023/07/tajikistan-bans-pamir-daily-news-as-extremist-organization/)
 - ¹¹ <https://cpj.org/2023/07/tajikistan-bans-pamir-daily-news-as-extremist-organization/>. The outlet has since rebranded as Pamir Inside.
 - ¹² <https://cpj.org/2024/01/in-tajikistan-independent-media-throttled-by-state-repression/>
 - ¹³ <https://cpj.org/2024/01/in-tajikistan-independent-media-throttled-by-state-repression/>. Another often-cited major problem is a subsidiary legal act requiring print media to obtain permission from the SCNS in order to apply for obligatory state registration. This allows the authorities to deny or indefinitely delay registration, and has contributed to a situation in which state print media vastly outnumber independent print media – by a factor of around 13:1,

according to a recent report (<https://www.ozodi.org/a/vazorati-farhang-guft-ki-charo-rasonahoi-mustaqil-dar-tojikiston-kam-shudaand/33660277.html>). Local journalists told CPJ that, although not required by law, the same is often informally required for online media in order to be allowed to operate.

¹⁴ <https://cpj.org/2017/12/tajik-journalist-arrested-after-alleging-official/>; <https://cpj.org/data/people/daler-sharifov/>

¹⁵ <https://cpj.org/data/people/ulfatkhonim-mamadshoeva/>

¹⁶ <https://fergana.agency/news/126182/>

¹⁷ <https://eurasianet.org/tajikistan-respected-activist-faces-prison-over-alleged-plotting-with-us-government>

¹⁸ <https://www.prokuratura.tj/66-to-ik/news/1822-alasai-ayati-mushovara-dar-prokuraturai-general-505.html?highlight=WzIwMjJd> (viewable at:

https://web.archive.org/web/20240601000000*/https://www.prokuratura.tj/66-to-ik/news/1822-alasai-ayati-mushovara-dar-prokuraturai-general-505.html?highlight=WzIwMjJd bottom of page);

<https://cpj.org/2022/12/tajikistan-authorities-sentence-2-journalists-to-lengthy-prison-terms/>

¹⁹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/07/tajikistan-un-experts-deplore-criminal-proceedings-against-human-rights>; see also the experts' earlier letter to Tajik authorities on these cases:

<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=28026>

²⁰ <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/WGAD/2024/18>

²¹ <https://cpj.org/data/people/khushruz-jumayev-khushom-gulyam/>; Jumayev is better known by the pen name Khushom Gulyam.

²² <https://www.prokuratura.tj/66-to-ik/news/1822-alasai-ayati-mushovara-dar-prokuraturai-general-505.html?highlight=WzIwMjJd>; <https://cpj.org/2022/12/tajikistan-authorities-sentence-2-journalists-to-lengthy-prison-terms/>

²³ Bobiev and Ghurbatov are publicly known by the names Daler Imomali and Abdullo Ghurbati.

²⁴ Ghurbatov was also accused of subscribing to a YouTube channel linked to the banned opposition;

<https://prokuratura.tj/news-tj/1633-alasai-ayati-mushovara-dar-prokuraturai-general-484.html>

²⁵ <https://cpj.org/data/people/abdusattor-kotibov-abdusattor-pirmuhammadzoda/>;

<https://cpj.org/data/people/zavqibek-solehov-zavqibek-saidamini/>; Solehov and Kotibov are publicly known by the pen names Zavqibek Saidamini and Abdusattor Pirmuhammadzoda.

²⁶ <https://cpj.org/data/people/khurshed-fozilov/>

²⁷ Ibid. Fozilov was convicted after a two-day closed-door trial. CPJ and other rights groups have criticized the ban of Akhbor as censorship: <https://cpj.org/2020/04/tajikistan-bans-independent-akhbor-news-website/>

²⁸ <https://cpj.org/data/people/ahmad-ibrohim/>

²⁹ <https://cpj.org/data/people/rukshona-hakimova/>

³⁰ This recommendation was included in HCHR's letter to Tajikistan's foreign minister following the UPR cycle. OHCHR's report cited UNHRC's concern over "broad and vague definitions of terrorism, extremism and public justification of terrorist and extremist activity" and misuse of the legislation to limit and repress freedom of expression, as well as OSCE-ODIHR's concern that arbitrarily applied extremism charges threatened the free exercise of journalists' professional activities. According to CPJ's research, during the previous cycle one Tajik journalist was imprisoned on extremism-related charges and sentenced to one year in prison.

³¹ On information about allegations provided by journalists and their relatives, see: case of Fozilov (27); Bobiev stated that his extremism charge was based on a short and innocuous Facebook Messenger conversation with an individual who he did not know was linked to an exiled political group banned in Tajikistan but widely recognized internationally as peaceful (<https://cpj.org/data/people/daler-bobiev-daler-imomali/>); Kotibov stated that his extremism charge was based on social media interactions carried out while his phone was confiscated by police (<https://cpj.org/data/people/abdusattor-kotibov-abdusattor-pirmuhammadzoda/>); on the allegations against Ibrohim see: <https://cpj.org/data/people/ahmad-ibrohim/>. For the UNWAGD ruling on Mamadshoeva see 18. Some of the extensive circumstantial evidence that the charges against each of the journalists were retaliation for their work is provided in the sections in this submission on their cases; for more details see CPJ's coverage of each case.

³² The UN's Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances noted that the practice of enforced disappearance for a short duration following initial apprehension was widespread.

³³ OHCHR's report for the previous UPR cycle cited UNHRC's concern about reports of torture or ill-treatment of detainees, particularly for the purposes of extracting confessions; the admission of evidence obtained under torture by domestic courts, despite such evidence being inadmissible in law; the absence of an independent mechanism to investigate allegations; and low numbers of investigations and prosecutions.[30] Several countries recommended that Tajikistan strengthen measures to prevent torture and ill-treatment and to ensure that instances of torture are thoroughly investigated and prosecuted; these recommendations were included in HCHR's letter to Tajikistan's foreign minister.

³⁴ <https://cpj.org/2022/10/jailed-tajik-journalist-abdusattor-pirmuhammadzoda-describes-severe-physical-abuse-forced-confession-in-letter/>

³⁵ <https://cpj.org/data/people/khushruz-jumayev-khushom-gulyam/>; <https://www.ozodi.org/a/payomi-khushom-ghulom-az-zindon/33686909.html>

³⁶ <https://cpj.org/data/people/khurshed-fozilov/>

³⁷ <https://cpj.org/data/people/daler-bobiev-daler-imomali/>

³⁸ <https://www.ozodi.org/a/32078052.html>. Local journalists told CPJ that each of the six journalists detained in 2022 was forced to record a false confession video.

³⁹ <https://cpj.org/data/people/abdusattor-kotibov-abdusattor-pirmuhammadzoda/>. CPJ is not aware of any other investigations being conducted into allegations of abuse. The authorities have stated that other journalists did not file complaints about abuse or that such complaints have been withdrawn. However, according to CPJ's information, journalists face pressure to not file or to withdraw such complaints and fear retaliation if they file them - it is clear that authorities' decision to move Kotibov, who made the most high-profile claims of torture, to a harsh high-security prison far from his family was retaliation for his complaint. Secondly, the journalists have no faith that complaints will be independently reviewed. It is therefore clear that there is no functioning system for investigating claims of torture and abuse.

⁴⁰ Several recommendations at the previous UPR highlighted the need for measures to ensure the right to a fair trial and judicial independence; this recommendation was included in the HCHR's letter to Tajikistan's foreign minister.

⁴¹ Given well-documented reprisals against lawyers working on political cases, the journalists' lawyers generally avoided speaking to the press or human rights groups. Relatives of the detained journalists were also too fearful to speak to the media and rights groups; some told CPJ the authorities warned them not to. Relatives were generally not permitted to attend trial hearings and received insufficient information from lawyers.

⁴² Tajikistan has long been recognized as one of the world's most prolific practitioners of transnational repression.

See: https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/Complete_FH_TransnationalRepressionReport2021_rev020221.pdf. Regarding exiled journalists, Tajikistan has a well-documented history of targeting them by harassing their family members in Tajikistan:

<https://cpj.org/2019/07/tajik-authorities-harass-journalist-humayra-bakhti/>; <https://cpj.org/2020/07/tajikistan-authorities-question-family-members-of-exiled-journalist/>

⁴³ <https://www.ozodi.org/a/32333808.html>; Rustam Djoniev is better known by the name Rustomi Joni.

⁴⁴ <https://www.ozodi.org/a/32820495.html>; Under Article 307(1) of Tajikistan's criminal code, subject to up to 12 years in prison.

⁴⁵ <https://cpj.org/2024/05/cpj-calls-on-tajikistan-authorities-to-stop-harassing-relatives-of-exiled-journalists/>; The list included Djoniev and Sarkorova, four journalists from exiled Azda TV, four from exiled Payom, and two independent journalists.

⁴⁶ <https://cpj.org/2022/06/tajikistan-authorities-detain-question-relatives-of-exiled-journalist-anora-sarkorova/>

⁴⁷ <https://www.rferl.org/a/asliddin-sharipov-sentenced-brother-payom-shavkat-muhammadi-tajikistan/33055028.html>; <https://nhc.no/en/proxy-persecution-in-tajikistan-opposition-journalists-brother-disappears-after-forced-return-from-russia/>

⁴⁸ <https://cpj.org/2024/05/cpj-calls-on-tajikistan-authorities-to-stop-harassing-relatives-of-exiled-journalists/>

⁴⁹ These recommendations relate in particular to: Aligning legislation on the media with international standards (123.78; 123.161; 123.151; 123.159); guaranteeing the exercise of the right to freedom of expression, including by bringing counter-extremism and counter-terrorism legislation into line with international standards (123.154; 123.1; 123.46). Separately, this submission makes clear that it is vital that Tajikistan complies with recommendations on ensuring adequate mechanisms for investigating detainees' claims of torture and abuse, including by creating a truly independent human rights ombudsman office (123.122; 123.136; 123.22; 123.26; 123.30; 123.82; 123.83).