

**Amnesty International Annual Report 2011
(January-December 2010)**

TAJIKISTAN

Republic of Tajikistan

Head of state: Emomali Rahmon

Head of government: Okil Okilov

Death penalty: abolitionist in practice

Population: 7.1 million

Life expectancy: 67.3 years

Under-5 mortality (m/f): 83/74 per 1,000

Adult literacy: 99.7 per cent

Torture and other ill-treatment continued. Freedom of expression remained restricted. The authorities failed to effectively prevent and prosecute violence against women and to protect survivors.

Torture and other ill-treatment

There were continued reports of torture and other ill-treatment by law enforcement officers. The common police practice of incommunicado detention before formally opening a criminal case increased the risk of torture and other ill-treatment. Confessions extracted under duress continued to be used as evidence in courts. Victims rarely reported physical abuse by law enforcement officers for fear of repercussions, and impunity remained the rule. Tajikistani human rights groups, lawyers and judges called on the government to include a precise definition of torture, in line with international standards, in national legislation.

* On 26 February, Nematillo Botakozuev, a Kyrgyzstani human rights defender, was detained by police in the Tajikistani capital, Dushanbe, after he had visited the office of the UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, to apply for refugee status. He was wanted by the Kyrgyzstani authorities for his alleged involvement in a demonstration in the town of Nookat in 2008. He was held incommunicado for almost a month and reportedly tortured at the premises of the State Committee for National Security. He was also reportedly denied appropriate medical treatment. On 22 May he was extradited to Kyrgyzstan and released by a court in the city of Osh.

* Ilhom Ismonov was detained on 3 November in Khujand in Soghd region and charged with "organizing a criminal group". He was not brought before a judge until nine days later on 12 November, in contravention of the Tajikistani Criminal Procedure Code, which states that detainees must be brought before a judge to rule on their continued detention no later than 72 hours after their arrest. He was also denied access to his lawyer until he appeared in court. He reportedly told the judge that he had been given electric shocks and had boiling water poured over his body while held at the Department for the Fight against Organized Crime (6th Department) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Khujand. The judge reportedly did not address the torture allegations. In December, the Prosecutor's office of Soghd region informed Ilhom Ismonov's wife and lawyer that its examination of the case had shown that the allegations of torture were false, that he had not been unlawfully detained, and that there had been no problem with his access to a lawyer. No details

were given on how the examination was conducted.

Freedom of expression – journalists

Tajikistani and international human rights groups reported that independent media outlets and journalists continued to face criminal and civil law suits for criticizing the government. Pressure on the media increased particularly in the run-up to the parliamentary elections in February and in the aftermath of the September ambush in Rasht district by alleged Islamist militants and former opposition commanders, in which 28 government troops were killed. In September and October the websites of local news agencies and an opposition blog were allegedly blocked by the authorities, and tax inspections allegedly targeted media outlets that had been critical of the authorities in connection with the Rasht events.

Violence against women

Violence against women remained a serious problem; between one third and half of all women have suffered physical, psychological or sexual violence at the hands of their husbands or other family members at some time during their lives. Despite some initial steps by the government to combat violence against women – such as the establishment of five police stations with specially trained police officers – Tajikistan continued to fall short of its international obligations to protect women from violence in the family. Women’s access to the criminal justice system was still very restricted with inadequate police and judicial response, resulting in massive under-reporting. There were insufficient services to protect the survivors of domestic violence, such as shelters and adequate and safe alternative housing. There was still no functioning nationwide cross-referral system between health workers, crisis and legal aid centres, law enforcement agencies and others for survivors of domestic violence. The draft law “Social and legal protection from domestic violence” – in preparation for several years – had still not been presented to parliament.

Amnesty International visits/reports

* Amnesty International delegates visited Tajikistan in March.