

Tajikistan

REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN

Head of state: Imomali Rakhmon

Head of government: Okil Okilov

Death penalty: retentionist

Population: 6.7 million

Life expectancy: 66.3 years

Under-5 mortality (m/f): 116/103 per 1,000

Adult literacy: 99.5 per cent

Further restrictions were imposed on freedom of religion. Dozens of suspected members of banned Islamist groups were detained and allegedly tortured or otherwise ill-treated. Some were convicted after grossly unfair trials.

Background

A presidential amnesty marked the 10th anniversary of the 1997 peace agreement that ended the five-year civil war. The amnesty covered former opposition combatants, but excluded those convicted of terrorism or murder. The UN Tajikistan Office of Peacebuilding ended its seven-year mission in July.

The Supreme Court banned 10 organizations as terrorist, including the Islamic Party of Turkestan, also known as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU); and Tojikistoni Ozod (Free Tajikistan), an Uzbekistan-based political party that the authorities considered a threat to Tajikistan's national security.

In March President Imomali Rakhmonov removed the Russian suffix from his surname, changing it to Rakhmon. He recommended that all newborn children be registered with Tajik surnames.

Freedom of religion

Freedom of religion was under attack. Unregistered mosques were closed down or demolished in the capital, Dushanbe. Urban redevelopment plans in Dushanbe reportedly threatened the city's synagogue and several churches. A proposed new law on religion included stringent registration requirements that would make it very difficult for religious minorities to apply or reapply for legal status. The draft law also proposed to limit the number of registered places of worship and to ban missionary activity. Pending the adoption of the new law, the government did not accept new applications for legal status.

- In October the government revoked the legal status of the Jehovah's Witnesses and banned all their activities. The Jehovah's Witnesses were first registered in 1994. Officials told representatives that the decision was based on Jehovah's Witnesses' refusal to perform military service and their proselytizing activities. Two Protestant groups were also suspended for three months. All three organizations appealed against the decisions.

Abuses against alleged Islamists

Dozens of members and suspected members of banned Islamist groups, including the IMU, were detained on national security grounds and allegedly tortured or otherwise ill-treated in detention. At least 20 alleged IMU members were sentenced to long prison terms after trials that fell far short of international standards of fairness, including the public branding of defendants as guilty before trial.

'War on terror'

In August, two men who had been transferred to Tajikistan in March after six years in US custody at Guantánamo Bay were sentenced to 17 years in prison by a court in Dushanbe. They were convicted of illegally crossing the border into Afghanistan in 2001 and fighting with the IMU against US and Allied forces.

Earlier in March, a court in southern Tajikistan sentenced another former Guantánamo detainee to 23 years in prison for his part in a bomb attack in Tajikistan in 2000. He had reportedly been captured by US forces in Afghanistan.

Amnesty International report

- Central Asia: Summary of human rights concerns, January 2006-March 2007 (EUR 04/001/2007)