Statement by Bureau of Human Rights and Rule of Law

UPR Info Pre-session on Tajikistan

Topic: Rights of People Released from Places of Detention

For more than 25 years, our organisation has been working to promote and protect human rights in Tajikistan. Since the first cycle of the Universal Periodic Review in 2010, the Bureau has actively participated in all stages of the UPR process. We coordinate the work of the Civil Society Coalition in preparing stakeholder reports, organise national consultations jointly with State authorities and monitor the implementation of UPR recommendations.

We welcome the constructive dialogue between the State and civil society in the preparation for Tajikistan's fourth UPR cycle. In 2025–2026, a series of national consultations and coordination meetings were organised jointly with the Human Rights Guarantees Department of the Executive Office of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, with the participation of State institutions, civil society organisations and international partners. These meetings focused on the preparation of the National Report and on discussing priority human rights issues.

Today, we would like to draw your attention to an issue that has not previously been the subject of specific UPR recommendations, but which is of fundamental importance for human rights, public safety and sustainable development — the rights of people released from places of detention and their social reintegration.

We would like to acknowledge a number of positive developments.

In recent years, Tajikistan has adopted a Strategy for Reforming the Penitentiary System, aimed at further humanising the execution of sentences and improving the functioning of penitentiary institutions.

In addition, an interagency Working Group on the development of the draft Law on Probation has been established, comprising representatives of State institutions, Parliament, international organisations and civil society, including our organisation. The draft law has already been prepared, and according to information from State authorities, its adoption is expected by the end of 2026. The establishment of a Probation Service will be an important step towards creating a system of support for people after release and will contribute to successful social reintegration and reducing reoffending.

In this context, a feasibility study on establishing a probation service in Tajikistan was conducted with the support of UNDP. The study identified the need for a coordinated system of case management and referral to legal aid, employment, vocational training, housing, healthcare and psychosocial services, both before and after release. It also highlighted the importance of cooperation between State institutions and civil society in providing these services.

We consider these measures to demonstrate the State's commitment to continuing reforms in this area.

However, despite this progress, for many people, the main difficulties begin precisely after release.

First, many people need to restore their identity documents. Without a passport, it is not possible to obtain formal employment, register as unemployed, receive social benefits, access healthcare services and exercise many other rights.

The scale of the reintegration needs is also reflected in available data. Over ten years, social reintegration centres provided consultations and assistance to more than 6,000 beneficiaries, around 30 per cent of whom were women. Lawyers and social workers also assisted 319 people in obtaining new-format passports, while 3,735 prisoners completed vocational training. These figures demonstrate the continuing need for practical assistance before and after release.

Second, access to employment remains a serious challenge. Although the legislation provides for the submission of a criminal record certificate only for certain positions, in practice many employers request such certificates from applicants. As a result, having a criminal record becomes a de facto barrier to employment and to successfully rebuilding an independent life after release.

Third, many people after release face a lack of housing and social support. The 2025 UNDP feasibility study identified lack of transitional housing as a major barrier to reintegration.

In addition, continuity of healthcare after release remains a serious concern. While healthcare, including treatment for tuberculosis and HIV, is available within the penitentiary system, the UNDP feasibility study found that there is **no established continuum of care** ensuring follow-up treatment in the community. Released people may face difficulties related to identification documents, registration and access to services, which can interrupt treatment and access to necessary healthcare.

In this regard, we call on States to recommend that the Republic of Tajikistan:

- **actively promote and implement non-custodial alternatives to imprisonment, including community service, corrective labour, suspended or conditional sentences, and conditional early release, with appropriate supervision and rehabilitation support;**
- **adopt the Law of the Republic of Tajikistan on Probation and establish a national Probation Service providing comprehensive, individualised support to people preparing for release and people released from places of detention;**
- **develop and implement a State Programme on the social reintegration of people preparing for release and people released from places of detention, providing support in restoring identity documents, finding employment, accessing housing, education, healthcare and social protection, while taking gender considerations into account;**
- **legally establish an exhaustive list of professions and positions for which a criminal record certificate may be requested, and eliminate discriminatory practices in employment;**
- **ensure the effective implementation of legislation on equality and non-discrimination with regard to people released from places of detention and people with criminal records, including through specific support measures for women after release.**

Thank you for your attention.