

33rd session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 6 – Adoption of the outcome of the UPR of Tajikistan
22 September 2016

Tajikistan should end massive crackdown on opposition groups, critics and lawyers

Within days after Tajikistan's appearance before the UPR in May 2016, Tajik prosecutors demanded life sentences for four leaders of the banned Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT), the country's main opposition party. The Supreme Court pronounced the sentences in the politically motivated cases in June: life terms for IRPT's first deputy and deputy chairman, 28 years in prison for four party leaders, and lengthy prison terms for eight others.

Since the UPR, the political crackdown against the IRPT and other critics, including dozens of activists, journalists and lawyers, intensified. Authorities have arrested, disappeared, imprisoned, and tortured members of the country's peaceful political opposition, and have also targeted perceived critics abroad.

Tajikistan accepted the recommendation to respect *"the right to a fair trial, including as part of the ongoing trial against the leaders of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan"* (118.35). But in fact, it subjected them to a blatantly unfair trial, behind closed doors, marred by serious violations of due process and credible allegations of torture or ill-treatment in pre-trial detention. Tajikistan accepted the recommendations to *"provide human rights defenders, including defence attorneys and political figures detained as a result of their political activities, such as [lawyers] Burzurgmehr Yorov, Shuhrat Qudratov, and Ishaq Tabarov and his sons, with fair, open, and transparent trials"* (118.67). But in reality, they were detained on trumped-up charges for having attempted to represent the IRPT leaders on trial. On 19 September, only three days ago, a Tajik prosecutor demanded a 25-year sentence for human rights lawyer Burzurgmehr Yorov.

And when put to the test to *"release prisoners arrested on politically motivated charges, including members of the Islamic Renaissance party of Tajikistan [IRPT], Group 24 and their lawyers"* (118.69), the Tajik authorities showed their true face and refused to accept this recommendation.

More positively, we are encouraged by the many recommendations accepted by Tajikistan to combat domestic violence against women and children. Since the UPR, Tajikistan worked to expand the number of female police inspectors who have received training in responses to gender-based violence from four to twelve and issued further instructions to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on the implementation of the 2013 law on the prevention of family violence. We urge Tajikistan to commit to full implementation of the 2013 law and ensure that victims of domestic violence receive adequate protection and services, and that those responsible for abuses are held accountable.

Mr. President,

The gravity of the political crackdown in Tajikistan means the country's international partners should make clear there will be specific policy consequences, including restrictive measures such as visa bans and asset freezes against officials responsible for grave human rights violations, if the brutal repression against the IRPT, Group 24, and other critics continues.