

TAJIKISTAN

HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS

Four years after a peace agreement ended Tajikistan's civil war, political violence continued and the government moved closer to single-party rule. It imposed increasing control over political and religious life by obstructing political opposition, arresting citizens on religious grounds, and severely restricting the media. Torture by police and security forces remained endemic.

Assassinations of high-ranking political figures reflected ongoing internal power struggles between and within the parties to the 1997 peace agreement—the government, led by President Emomali Rakhmonov, and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), now disbanded. On April 11, Deputy Interior Minister Habib Sanginov, a former UTO political representative and key contributor to the peace negotiations, together with two of his bodyguards and driver, was shot by three unidentified assailants in Dushanbe. Sanginov's relatives dismissed the official version for his killing—that Sanginov had refused to repay a loan—and asserted it was connected to his efforts to identify illegal criminal groups with alleged links to the government. Authorities detained and harassed Sanginov's friends and relatives, causing at least one to flee the country. On July 17, gunmen killed Karim Yuldashev, a presidential foreign policy advisor, at his home in the capital. On September 8, Minister of Culture Abdurahim Rahimov was shot by unidentified gunmen outside his home in Dushanbe.

Renewed fighting between former UTO members and government forces in 2001 highlighted continuing distrust between the two sides and shortcomings in the demobilization process envisaged in the 1997 peace agreement. In June, former UTO field commanders based in northeastern Tajikistan took hostage at least four policemen in Teppa Samarkandi and fifteen members of a German humanitarian aid organization in Tavil-Dara. The kidnappers protested the arrest of former UTO members in connection with the murder of Habib Sanginov. All hostages were released unharmed, but a military operation against the rebel fighters ensued. Local legal experts and journalists reported that government forces' indiscriminate fire killed or injured up to eighty civilians, and that Tajik law enforcement agencies beat civilians and looted. Authorities acknowledged six civilian deaths.

UTO representation in the government, mandated by the peace accords, remained at best a formality, as in practice their officials and parliamentary deputies supported official policy and the president on almost all points. In 2001 the government moved to consolidate its de facto single-party control by banning and denying registration to opposition parties. The Adolatkoh (Justice) party was banned on charges of violation of the law on political parties, and party officials claimed that its supporters had been intimidated by authorities into denying membership in the party. Registration documents for the Social Democratic Party languished with the Ministry of Justice. Pro-government candidates in the December

2000 and May 2001 parliamentary by-elections ran uncontested, as opposition candidates were denied registration on charges of violating electoral procedure.

The government harassed and arrested several members of the Islamic Revival Party (IRP), a key part of the former UTO, claiming they were members of Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation), a banned Islamic organization. The IRP claimed that only one of its members supported the organization and that the government was using the crackdown against Hizb ut-Tahrir as a pretext to weaken the IRP.

Courts handed down increasingly severe sentences against scores of Hizb ut-Tahrir members. Whereas in previous years sentences ranged between five and twelve years, on charges of inciting religious hatred, distributing antistate literature, membership in banned organizations, and attempted violent overthrow of the state, in 2001 these charges brought sentences of up to fourteen years of imprisonment. Hizb ut-Tahrir advocated Islamic government and reestablishment of the caliphate by peaceful means.

The government continued severely to restrict freedom of expression. The sole state-owned publishing house for newspapers continued to censor material critical of the government or influential public figures. The authorities "counseled" all media on political content, and enforced pre-publication censorship and burdensome licensing procedures for media outlets. The government granted broadcast licenses to one independent radio station in northern Sugd province, while authorities in Dushanbe continued for a fourth year to deny operating licenses to both independent radio and television stations.

The authorities attempted to punish a foreign-based journalist for his criticism of the government. On July 5, Dodojon Atovullo, exiled editor-in-chief of the opposition newspaper *Charogi Ruz* (Light of Day), was arrested in Moscow, upon the request of Tajik law enforcement agencies. Atovullo had in recent years published articles accusing Tajik authorities of corruption and involvement in narcotics trafficking. Threatened with extradition back to Tajikistan to face charges of sedition and publicly slandering the president, he was released after six days after pressure from other governments and international organizations.

Tajik authorities continued to refuse entry to more than 10,000 Afghans who fled fighting in northern Afghanistan in late 2000. The government claimed that the presence of armed combatants among the refugees posed too great a security risk to Tajikistan and that the country lacked the necessary economic and social resources to accommodate them. The displaced Afghans were living in squalid conditions on islands in the Pianj River on the border between the two countries and were at times subjected to crossfire between United Front and Taliban forces. Their numbers steadily increased prior to and during the U.S.-led military offensive in Afghanistan. Authorities also ordered several thousand Afghan refugees already resident in Dushanbe to relocate to areas south and west of the capital to "ensure security and public order in places of settlement." While police harassed refugees following the order, as of this writing there were no reports of refugees having been forcibly relocated. In mid-October Dushanbe authorities closed three Afghan schools, charging that they violated administrative regulations, and refused to issue identity documents to Afghan refugees.

The International Organization for Migration reported that more than a thou-

sand women, including minors, were trafficked in 2000 to the Middle East and Commonwealth of Independent States countries, where they were often employed in the sex industry. Traffickers paid bribes to Tajik law enforcement officials to procure travel documents and facilitate travel arrangements.

Antipersonnel landmines remained a feature of the Tajik landscape in 2001. Most were laid by Uzbek government forces in 2000, in response to the incursions of that year by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan through Tajikistan into Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

Local human rights defenders raised human rights violations in international fora, but the atmosphere of fear and intimidation prevented active monitoring and advocacy within the country. One notable initiative included a roundtable on the death penalty jointly organized by the OSCE and the League of Women Lawyers of Tajikistan. A principal recommendation was a moratorium on the death penalty.

THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Tajikistan assumed a high profile as the U.S. military counterterrorism campaign in Afghanistan got underway. It was of strategic importance both for humanitarian relief operations in northern Afghanistan, and potentially as a base for U.S. military deployment. International actors seeking to bolster financial assistance to Tajikistan in recognition of its new strategic role made no effort whatsoever to take into account the country's dismal human rights record. Tajikistan was granted membership in NATO's Partnership for Peace program.

United Nations

The U.N. Office of Peace-Building (UNTOP), the United Nation's small peace-building mission that followed six years of peacekeeping operations, made a priority of attracting international assistance for job creation programs for former combatants and improvements of the rule of law. The UNTOP mission's staff included a human rights officer, whose brief, however, did not include human rights monitoring.

The U.N. High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) pursued a wavering policy regarding the displaced Afghanis on the Pianj river islands. In early 2001, the high commissioner requested the Tajik government to create the necessary conditions to admit the displaced, by, among other things, separating combatants from civilians and moving the latter to a safer area. When the authorities refused, UNHCR suspended its own relief operations on the islands in mid-March, also arguing that effective relief could not be delivered until combatants were separated from civilians. UNHCR continued to press the Tajik government on devising a strategy for separating combatants from civilians.

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

The OSCE mission headquarters in Dushanbe and its field offices in Khujand, Shaartuz, Dusti, and Kurgan-Tiube intervened in several individual human rights cases involving torture, rape, murder, and commutation of the death penalty. It monitored policies in southern Khatlon province on employment and access to land that discriminated against the Uzbek minority, visited some of the country's prisons, and did limited trial monitoring. Other notable activities included round tables on the death penalty and trafficking of women and children and the initiation of a project to train prison personnel. The mission also provided legal assistance to Tajiks deported from Uzbekistan and helped to draft new laws on the media to bring them into conformity with international norms. It did not, however, publicly intervene to attempt to prevent the single-party elections in May.

Russia

After the September 11 attacks in the United States, Russia for the first time publicly admitted its longstanding provision of material support to the United Front, delivered via Tajikistan. It also increased this support during the course of the U.S. campaign. Tajikistan's role as a strategic partner in the U.S.-led operation in Afghanistan became possible when Russia cleared the way for U.S. use of Tajikistan's airports.

In October, Russia sent at least 1,500 troops to Tajikistan, adding to the already more than 10,000 Russian border guards stationed along the Tajik-Afghan border, and about 10,000 troops of the 201st Motorized Rifle Division headquartered in Dushanbe.

United States

Tajikistan became a strategic partner in the U.S. government's counter-terrorism campaign when it offered the use of airports by U.S. forces should the need arise, and the United States continued to channel important amounts of humanitarian aid through the country. The State Department's annual report of human rights practices delivered an unbiased and in general accurate account of the human rights situation.

International Financial Institutions

Donor activity increased significantly in 2001, largely in reaction to the recognition of Tajikistan's importance to Central Asian security. A U.N.-sponsored donors' conference in May resulted in pledges of U.S. \$430 million for poverty reduction and economic growth in 2001-2002. In addition, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development contributed \$2 million for rehabilitation and \$13 million in loans for telecommunications modernization, while the World Bank issued a \$50 million tranche of a continuing loan for poverty reduction programs and economic reforms. The Asian Development Bank made a \$4.4 million loan for recon-

struction of water supply systems. During the course of the U.S.-led military coalition operations in Afghanistan, Germany included Tajikistan on its list of priority countries for development assistance.

TURKEY

HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS

The strongly nationalist ruling coalition of the Democratic Left Party, Nationalist Action Party, and Motherland Party once again failed to enact key reforms in the face of longstanding opposition to these measures by the army and security forces. The government's National Program for Accession to the European Union should have marked a turning point for human rights, but consisted mainly of vague and general undertakings that were clearly designed to delay or avoid significant change. In June the Constitutional Court closed the religious Virtue Party for "actions against the republic's secular principles." An opportunity for significant change was missed in October, when a package of constitutional amendments were enacted that shortened detention periods, but left the death penalty and constraints on freedom of expression on the statute books. Three provinces remained under state of emergency. In December, security forces deliberately killed prisoners resisting transfers to new high security "F-type prisons," and beat them in transit. Thirty-three prisoners died in hunger strikes.

The Turkish government talked about lifting constraints on free expression, but did not take effective legislative action to do so. Those who challenged the official view of the role of religion, ethnicity, and the army were prosecuted and imprisoned. In June, Dr. Fikret Baskaya began serving his third prison term for his writings, a sixteen-month sentence for "separatist propaganda" under article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law, for a 1999 newspaper article about the trial of Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Öcalan. Ahmet Turan Demir, deputy chairperson of the People's Democracy Party (HADEP) which has a largely Kurdish membership, was committed to Ankara Closed Prison in August to serve a one-year sentence under article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law for a speech at his party's youth congress in 1998.

Military courts tried civilians on charges limiting free expression. In December Sanar Yurdatapan, coordinator of the Freedom of Expression Initiative, and Nevzat Onaran of the Contemporary Journalists' Association were imprisoned by the General Staff Military Court with two-month sentences for "criticizing the institution of military service."

Governors closed exhibitions, banned film shows, and confiscated books and newspapers. In August police confiscated the Women Pensioners' Union booklet *Voice and Courage*, which published speeches from a conference on sexual assault and rape in custody, and officials of the group were charged with "insulting the security forces."