

ing terrorism” in Chechnya, instead of stressing the essentially political nature of the conflict, was reflected in the administration’s reluctance to allow Russia’s abusive conduct to have any consequence either in bilateral relations or in international fora. Nowhere was this more evident than at the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, where, in contrast to 2001, the U.S. failed to make necessary efforts to garner support for a resolution on Chechnya introduced by the E.U.

To its credit, the administration took a strong position on media freedoms in Russia, raising the issue at every opportunity. During his May trip to Moscow, Bush met with civil society and human rights leaders, stressing U.S. support for the rule of law, a strong, independent media, and ethnic and religious tolerance.

The U.S. government ranked Russia as one of nineteen countries in the world failing to take effective measures to combat trafficking in persons. Lacking a law on trafficking, the Russian government did not prosecute traffickers or vigorously investigate trafficking cases. The ranking set Russia up for a suspension of all non-humanitarian aid to the country in 2003 if its record did not improve.

RELEVANT HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH REPORTS:

Conscription Through Detention In Russia’s Armed Forces, 11/02

The NATO Summit and Arms Trade Controls in Central and Eastern Europe, 11/02

Briefing Paper for the United Nations Committee against Torture Regarding Torture in the Russian Federation, 5/02

Last Seen...: Continued “Disappearances” in Chechnya, 4/02

Memorandum to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights on the Human Rights Situation in Chechnya, 3/02

Swept Under: Torture, Forced Disappearances, And Extrajudicial Killings During Sweep Operations In Chechnya, 2/02

TAJIKISTAN

HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS

Tajikistan’s new role in the global campaign against terrorism drew greater international concern to the country and created opportunities for some important human rights reforms. But it also strengthened President Emomali Rakhmonov’s de facto single-party rule. While the government took some positive steps in response to international pressure, it also kept the political opposition under tight rein. Authorities partly used the pretext of the war against terrorism to marginalize the northern province of Sughd and to increase control over peaceful religious believers and leaders.

Restrictions on freedom of expression eased in August when authorities granted operating licenses to three independent radio stations based in the capital, Dushanbe: Asia-Plus, Asia FM, and Vatan. In June, the procuracy announced that it would drop criminal charges—including public slander of the president and sedition—against exiled *Charogi Ruz* (Light of Day) editor Dodojon Atovullo. Authorities assured international organizations and Atovullo that he would be permitted to return safely to Dushanbe and resume publication of his newspaper, known for its unrelenting criticism of the Rakhmonov government.

Despite these changes, the majority of severe media restrictions remained firmly in place. The sole state-owned publishing house in Dushanbe conducted pre-publication censorship, authorities threatened and harassed journalists following publication of material considered critical of government policy or influential government figures, and cumbersome licensing procedures for media outlets continued to be enforced. In September, state television Kuliab correspondent Suhrob Farrukhshoev was fired after publishing a freelance article on the spread of typhoid in Kuliab, President Rakhmonov's home region. Television management told Farrukhshoev that they were following orders issued to them by the Kuliab local administration. Journalists also continued to practice consistent self-censorship, sometimes to an extreme degree. The May 31 edition of the Russian-language *Biznes i Politika*, for example, appeared with a blank space when two paragraphs reportedly critical of the work of law enforcement agents were removed. Newspaper employees explained that they themselves had expunged the paragraphs to avoid potential problems with law enforcement.

On October 28, three journalists working for independent television stations SM-1 and TRK-Asia in Khujand were forcibly conscripted by local military officials after the airing of a program that claimed that the military employs gangs to fulfill draft quotas. The journalists were Akram Azizov and Nasim Rahimov, SM-1 employees, and TRK-Asia collaborator Yusuf Yunusov.

Sugd province was a particular target of repression. The government, citing the war against terrorism, persecuted its opponents, subjected religious leaders to more intense surveillance, and handed down lengthy prison sentences to members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, an organization that advocates re-establishment of the Islamic Caliphate, or state, by peaceful means.

On June 11, former governor of Leninabad (now Sugd) province Abdujalil Hamidov was sentenced, along with eighteen others, to fifteen years of imprisonment during a closed trial on charges including embezzlement and attempted assassination of Rakhmonov. The prosecution linked some of the defendants to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), and the trial was the government's latest attempt to eliminate Hamidov's family as a political force. Hamidov is a relative of Abdumalik Abdullajonov, former prime minister of Tajikistan and former leader of the northern-based opposition National Revival Movement (NRM). In exile since the mid-1990s, Abdullajonov stands accused of masterminding an unsuccessful 1998 rebellion in Sugd; his brother, Abdugani, was unfairly convicted in 1999 on charges of having participated in the 1998 rebellion, and another brother, Abdulkhafiz Abdullaev, was sentenced to death in a closed 1998 trial for attempted assassination of the president, and reportedly executed. Hamidov's trial was con-

ducted mostly in prison, international observers were denied access to it, and many sources reported that, stricken with cancer, Hamidov had made a confession under duress. Death sentences were passed on at least four of Hamidov's co-defendants, despite unclear charges surrounding their convictions. Diplomatic and other international sources reported the death in detention of another of the nineteen defendants during the trial, although official medical documentation of the cause of death—allegedly cancer—was unavailable.

Following the lead of other Central Asian governments, Tajik officials in 2002 claimed that Hizb ut-Tahrir had previously been financed by al-Qaeda and the Taliban, and they referred increasingly to the group as a major security threat. The government maintained that a majority of Hizb ut-Tahrir members resided in Sugd, where Tajikistan's Uzbek minority is primarily based. Media and diplomatic sources reported increased numbers of arrests of Hizb ut-Tahrir members compared to previous years, with up to sixty arrests since the beginning of 2002. Local monitors and journalists alleged that Hizb ut-Tahrir members had unfair trials and were abused in detention. Trials produced sentences of up to eighteen years of imprisonment.

More pressure was directed at Sugd in July, when during a visit there Rakhmonov explicitly noted that three Tajik citizens detained by the United States (U.S.) at Guantánamo Bay were Sugd residents. He subsequently criticized local authorities for failing to curb the activities of "extremist" Islamic groups, including the construction of unsanctioned mosques. He also accused the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) of propagating "religious extremism." Shortly afterwards, governmental religious and Islamic councils were for the first time instructed to assess Islamic leaders' knowledge of Islam and of state religion laws. By October, the authorities had shut down at least thirty-three of a reported 152 mosques in Isfara district in Sugd, and had dismissed numerous imams allegedly on grounds of IRP membership (the IRP enjoys significant support in Isfara district). Rakhmonov further announced in July that the law on religion would be revised to require re-registration of mosques.

Authorities took steps to identify and hold accountable perpetrators of political killings, but resultant trials mostly led to death sentences. In May, eighty-two members of the armed band of former United Tajik Opposition (UTO) field commander Rakhmon Sanginov were brought to trial for murder, hostage taking, banditry, and robbery. One of the group's members, Rakhmatullo Tagoev, was on July 22 sentenced to death during a closed court session. On March 27, four men charged with the 2001 murder of Deputy Interior Minister Habib Sanginov were sentenced to death, and three others to prison sentences ranging from sixteen to twenty-five years. Human Rights Watch obtained eyewitness testimony of the torture in detention and coerced confessions of three of those convicted, including Kiomidin Mirzoev. In August, the Supreme Court sentenced to death Umedjon Davlatov for the 1998 murders of local and international United Nations officials and of Garm district chairman Sergei Davlatov in 2000; two co-defendants received respectively sixteen and twenty years of imprisonment.

The government continued to deliver death sentences at an alarming rate, with an average of at least five per month during the first half of 2002. Amnesty Interna-

tional charged that death sentences were handed down in unfair and secret trials, and executions often conducted in secrecy. Local and international organizations gathered information on the consistent use of torture to extract testimony from criminal suspects, in particular those charged with capital crimes.

The government maintained political control by obstructing the registration and activities of opposition political parties, denying registration altogether, and by refusing to register opposition election candidates. In October, the Democratic Party of Tajikistan (DPT) announced a boycott of Sugd province by-elections after the Central Electoral Commission denied an independent candidate, a member of the DPT, registration on the grounds of faulty registration documents. The DPT claimed that electoral commissions frequently registered only members of the presidential People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan (PDPT). When the PDPT candidate received an overwhelming majority of the vote against the remaining IRP candidate, the IRP rejected the results and accused local authorities of obstructing its candidate's campaign efforts. The newly-founded Unity Party of Tajikistan submitted registration documents to the Ministry of Justice in April, but at this writing was still not registered, and the Social Democratic Party also continued to be denied registration, for a third year.

On a positive note, in July jurisdiction over penal institutions was transferred from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Ministry of Justice. And in August, the right to freedom of movement was enhanced when the government abolished the exit visa requirement for travel abroad.

By September, more than 9,200 displaced Afghans who since late 2000 had been living on the Pianj river islands on the border with Afghanistan were "returned" to Afghanistan proper. They had endured harsh and sometimes life-threatening conditions on the islands, after the Tajik government had denied them entry at the frontier. Despite protests from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and diplomatic missions in Dushanbe, the Tajik authorities forcibly repatriated nine Afghan men in August and September 2002. Eight of them were deported on grounds of holding insufficient documentation.

In September, the Tajik government stated its intent to comply fully with its obligations as a state party to the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty. Its noncompliance hitherto involved failing to submit annual transparency reports and, most importantly, acquiescing to the planting of antipersonnel mines inside Tajikistan by Russian forces. Uzbek-laid antipersonnel mines continued to kill and injure civilians and livestock in Tajikistan in 2002.

DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

In March, the government established a national Human Rights Commission, headed by Deputy Prime Minister Saidamir Zuhurov, a former minister of security. Zuhurov's background raised doubts about whether the commission would provide genuine human rights protection; in September, for example, Zuhurov asserted that Hizb ut-Tahrir, targeted for severe repression throughout the region, represented a greater threat to the country than external invasion.

THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Tajikistan granted the use of airports in Dushanbe and Kuliab to the international coalition against terrorism for military operations in Afghanistan; in response, international aid—including to the military—grew, as did attention to the country. The U.S. and France deployed troops to Dushanbe and to Kuliab airport, while the United Kingdom, France, and Japan opened embassies. At the same time, international attention to human rights problems lessened. When high-level political leaders and donors made repeated visits to the country, they referred to Tajikistan's new political stability, but neglected to highlight torture and ongoing political and religious persecution. This international policy only served to embolden the government's repression.

The European Commission (E.C.) Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) project resumed work in the country after a four-year suspension following the 1997 death of a European Union (E.U.) expatriate employee in a hostage release operation. TACIS was to devote particular resources to Tajikistan's eventual ascension to the World Trade Organization. Taken together, credits promised by the U.S., the E.U., the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development rose from U.S.\$51 million in 2001 to \$322 million in 2002. Switzerland also tripled its aid to just under \$9 million.

United Nations

The U.N. Office of Peace-Building (UNTOP) brought together government officials, political parties, journalists, and others in political discussions in fifty-seven districts and towns. The office's human rights program included support for national capacity building and human rights education, but human rights monitoring continued to be excluded from the human rights officer's brief. At the time of writing, UNTOP was to begin police training programs. The office continued to devote significant resources to attracting international aid for Tajikistan, including for the reintegration of former combatants into civilian life.

In at least four cases during the year Tajikistan carried out death sentences despite the U.N. Human Rights Committee having requested a stay of execution. In addition to facilitating the return of more than 9,200 Afghan displaced persons to Afghanistan, UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration facilitated the voluntary repatriation of close to seven hundred Afghan refugees, and the return of some 250 Tajik refugee students from Pakistan to Tajikistan

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) maintained offices in Dushanbe, Khujand, Shaartuz, Dusti, Kurgan-Tiube, and Garm. Their work throughout the year included human rights training for law enforcement personnel, training on human rights monitoring, conferences on international crimi-

nal justice standards and discrimination against women, and a project on human trafficking. The OSCE conducted limited trial monitoring of cases involving torture.

United States

With U.S. troops deployed in Dushanbe and Kuliab in support of the counter-terrorism campaign, the U.S. consequently pledged long-term support, and provided military and military-technical cooperation. On January 9, as a reward for Tajikistan's assistance in the war on terrorism, the U.S. State Department announced the removal of arms sales restrictions imposed on Tajikistan in 1993. The State Department said it would review requests to buy arms on a "case-by-case basis." Numerous high-level governmental officials paid visits to the country, but avoided references to human rights violations in their public comments. The U.S. appeared to minimize attention to human rights in Tajikistan, in contrast to other Central Asian countries. The State Department's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2001* gave a generally accurate account of the human rights situation, however.

The U.S. delivered credits totaling a minimum of just over \$29 million in food aid and agricultural supplies, monies for infrastructure projects in Khatlon province and the Rasht (formerly Garm) Valley.

International Financial Institutions

Following the delivery of aid tranches in 2001, the International Monetary Fund in February rebuked Tajikistan for providing incorrect data to the fund on the country's external debt, but continued to hold discussions with the government to increase its support to Tajikistan. The ADB gave U.S.\$2.9 million for poverty reduction, \$5.3 million for earthquake disaster recovery, and \$5 million for landslide relief. In May, the E.C., in recognition of Tajikistan's worst drought in seventy-five years, gave €10 million (U.S.\$9.85 million) for drought assistance.

RELEVANT HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH REPORTS:

Dangerous Dealings: Changes to U.S. Military Assistance After September 11, 2/02