

Rights Group Urges Tajikistan Not To Deport Kyrgyz Activist

The international rights group Human Rights Watch is urging Tajik authorities not to deport a detained Kyrgyz human rights activist to Kyrgyzstan.

Nematullo Botakoziev sought political asylum in Tajikistan after Kyrgyz authorities accused him of organizing mass protests in 2008 and issued a warrant for his arrest.

For the last few weeks he has been held in custody in Dushanbe.

In a statement, Human Rights Watch called on Tajik authorities to grant Botakoziev access to his lawyer and investigate allegations that his detention was arbitrary.

Andrea Berg, Central Asia researcher for Human Rights Watch, told RFE/RL's Tajik Service she was concerned about Botakoziev's health, as he had suffered heart attacks in the past.

"We're asking the Tajik authorities to grant his lawyers access and the UNHCR access to him, and we're urging them to release him because today marks one month since he's been detained and kept in isolation and the one-month [maximum] detention period expires today," Berg said.

Tajikistan's ombudsman, Zarif Alizoda, said the recent Norouz holiday had resulted in a delay in the investigation into Botakoziev's case.

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