

Freedom of Speech in Tajikistan July 2009

This is a compilation of reports from Tajikistan's media and private reports from the NANSMIT monitoring network in the country

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In July 2009 the NANSMIT Monitoring Service received 18 reports. Eleven of them describe the factual situation in the media in the light of socio-legal and political environment; three reports describe direct violations of rights of media professionals; and four reports describe conflicts and accusations against the media and journalists.

I. PECULIARITIES OF POLITICAL, SOCIAL, ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGAL CLIMATE IN THE COUNTRY DEFINING THE FACTUAL SITUATION IN THE MEDIA

1. Public speeches and statements of government officials defining factual situation in the media

21 July
Emomali Rakhmon, President of Tajikistan, Dushanbe

"Specific and interesting broadcasts dedicated to the Tajik language on central and local radio and TV channels, promotion of its distinctive character, and mainstreaming the mass media into the state language is one of the most relevant tasks", - said Emomali Rakhmon, President of Tajikistan in his public message on the occasion of the 20-th anniversary of the adoption of the National Language Law.

Rakhmon noted that the state language should be reinforced on the basis of literary norms, and freed from artificial and extraneous models and dialectisms. The President expressed criticism regarding some Tajik periodicals, "which language does not meet requirements of the lingual standards and healthy taste". "Certain journalists - deliberately or ignorantly - use sophisticated and strange words and terms", - said Rakhmon.

2. Factual status of the media and freedom of speech

2 July
All media, Dushanbe

Speaking at a round table on 2 July in Dushanbe, Akbarali Sattorov, chairman of the Tajik Union of Journalists, said that the Tajik media community is going to approach the government with an appeal to support the Tajik media in the period of financial crisis.

Sattorov stressed the necessity of creating an anti-crisis journalistic unit.

Many newspapers in Khatlon province are published irregularly; they are issued mainly on the occasion of national events or celebrations. Most of the periodicals in Khatlon have affiliation to the government, but the authorities have stopped their financing.

The situation in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous province (GBAO) is similar.

10 July
Muso Dinorshoev, Vice President, Academy of Sciences, Dushanbe

Vice President of the Tajik Academy of Sciences Muso Dinorshoev suggested to hold press conferences in three main scientific directions. There are about 30 subordinate structures and scientific-research institutions under the Academy. Dinorshoev suggested to regularly update journalists on main achievements in the spheres of humanitarian, economic and exact sciences. The official said that the financing of science in the country at present amounts only to 0,03% of the national budget.

II. VIOLATION OF RIGHTS IN THE MEDIA

1. Impediments to professional activities in the media

10 June
Paikon weekly, Dushanbe

A policeman confiscated an ID card from a correspondent of the Paikon weekly in Dushanbe, when the journalist came to the dwelling facilities of the National Conservatory of Music. The full story on that is published in the Paikon issue #17, 08.07.09.

The policeman did not get into any explanations, advising the journalist to ask his editor to come and pick up the ID. After a while, the officer returned the document.

2. Ungrounded limitations in access to public information

2 July
State Statistics Committee, Dushanbe

Freelance journalist Gulnora Nosirova approached the Justice Council's statistical unit requiring information on the number of journalists bound to pay fines for defamation. Head of the statistics unit Zaragul Abdukodirzoda advised the journalist to apply to the State Statistics Committee.

The official stated that the requested information refers to national security, and she is not in the position to make it public.

3 July
Minister of Health, Dushanbe

The Minister of Health forbade all employees of the Ministry to communicate with the media. This order is related to the recent death of Khurshed Bobokalonov, who allegedly was killed in an incident with the police. Bobokalonov was a well-known physician.

Fotima Yakubova, head of the Ministry's press center advised journalists to approach the Minister with a written request if they need any particular information.

III. CONFLICTS. VIOLATIONS INCRIMINATED TO THE MEDIA AND JOURNALISTS

1. Claims for protection of honor, dignity and business reputation affected by publication of certain information

12 July
Khudoyor Valiev, correspondent, TV Kulyab, Khatlon province

Karakhon Makhmudov, head of the province education department came into conflict with Khudoyor Valiev, correspondent of the local TV station. On 9 July private newspapers SSSR and Pazhvok published detailed stories on that conflict.

Representatives of NANSMIT monitoring service in Kulyab officially approached Juraboi Sobirov, head of the Khatlon province education department with a request to discuss the actions of the official, and to inform about the results.

23 July
Ozodagon weekly, Dushanbe

Tabassum Tagaeva, professor of the Tajik State University sent an open letter to the editor of Ozodagon weekly requiring refutation on the recently published article, which allegedly was published on her behalf.

Tagaeva says that the published article may be wrongly interpreted by her colleagues and students, who may think that she had sordid motives.

14 July
Ikrom Mirzoev, Somonion TV, Khatlon province

On 14 July the Khatlon province Economic Court made a decision to deny the legal claim of Ikrom Mirzoev, director of Somonion TV against the TV and Radio Committee under the government.

According to Mirzoev, the claim was initiated upon the decision of the Supreme Economic Court (20 September 2007), which acknowledged illegal the refusal of the Committee's licensing commission to prolong the TV station's broadcasting license. Mirzoev in his claim asked the court to acknowledge the losses caused by the licensing commission in the amount of 86 thousand Somoni (about \$20 thousand).

This report is based on compiled materials from the media and private information presented by correspondents of the NANSMIT Monitoring Network

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