

Application by head of Khujand KVN team to prosecutor's office turns against himself

An application by Khairullo Mirsaidov, the head of the Khujand-based KVN team, to the Sughd prosecutor's office about attempted extortion by local officials has turned against himself.

In his application, Mirsaidov said that Olim Zohidzoda, the head of the Sughd directorate for youth and sports affairs, demanded a US\$1,000 bribe, which he said he refused to pay.

"Mirsaidov failed to produce evidence to support his application against Zohidzoda. Zohidzoda has filed a counterclaim against Mirsaidov accusing of defamation and the Sughd prosecutor's office instituted criminal proceedings against Mirsaidov under the provisions of Article 346 (2) of Tajikistan's Penal Code -- false denunciation," a source in the Tajik law enforcement authorities told Asia-Plus in an interview.

The source refrained from giving further details of the case.

Recall, Khairullo Mirsaidov, was put under custody on December 8. The Sughd prosecutor's office has instituted criminal proceedings against him under the provisions of four articles of Tajikistan's Penal Code.

According to the press center of the Sughd prosecutor's office, Mirsaidov face charges of embezzlement or misappropriation of state funds (Article 245, Part 4), inciting national racial, regional or religious enmity (Article 189, Part 2), document forgery (Article 340, Part 1) and false denunciation (Article 346, Part 2).

The charges brought against Mirsaidov carry up to a total of 21 years in prison under Tajikistan's Penal Code.

Khairullo Mirsaidov last month applied to the President of Tajikistan, Prosecutor-General Yusuf Rahmon and Sughd Governor Abdurahmon Qodiri, asking them to pay attention to problems facing the Khujand-based KVN team because of some corrupt officials in the Sughd province.

KVN (a Russian abbreviation for the Club of the Funny and Inventive People) is a Russian-speaking humor TV show and competition where teams compete by giving funny answers to questions and showing prepared sketches, that originated in the Soviet Union. The program was first aired by the First Soviet Channel on November 8, 1961. Eleven years later, in 1972, when few programs were being broadcast live, Soviet censors found the students' impromptu jokes offensive and anti-Soviet and banned KVN. The show was revived fourteen years later during the Perestroika era in 1986, with Alexander Maslyakov as its host. It is one of the longest-running TV programs on Russian Television.

During the Perestroika era, KVN spread to Russian expatriate communities around the world. In 1992 the Israel team tested the waters playing against the CIS team. The game was an unquestionable success and more international games on a highest level followed: the CIS team visited Israel, Germany and USA. The culmination was in 1994 with the First KVN World Festival in Israel with 4 teams (USA, Israel, CIS and Germany).

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