

CPJ Urges Tajikistan To Release Journalist Arrested, Charged After Alleging Extortion By Officials

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has called on Tajik authorities to immediately release prominent journalist Hairullo Mirsaidov and drop all charges against him.

"In a place where free media and critical voices are nearly non-existent, journalists like Mirsaidov should be recognized for the important work they do, not locked up on bogus charges," the New York-based media watchdog's Deputy Executive Director Robert Mahoney said in a statement on December 13.

Mirsaidov was charged on December 8 with embezzlement, forgery, false reporting to police, and inciting ethnic and religious hatred and sent to pretrial detention.

The charges carry a penalty of 21 years in jail.

The journalist's father, Khabibullo Mirsaidov, told RFE/RL that his son denied the accusations.

Mirsaidov was initially detained in his native city of Khujand on December 5, weeks after he published an open letter to President Emomali Rahmon, Prosecutor-General Yusuf Rahmon, and Sughd regional governor Abdurahmon Qodiri, asking them to crack down on corrupt local authorities.

Mirsaidov said that local officials who helped him secure budget funds for an improvisational comedy team to travel to Moscow to compete on a program called KVN demanded a \$1,000 bribe, which he said he refused to pay.

Mirsaidov, 39, is a former correspondent of the Dushanbe-based Asia-Plus news agency and Germany's Deutsche Welle radio.

Earlier on December 13, CPJ published a report saying that the number of journalists imprisoned worldwide had hit another new record.

In its [annual survey](#) of journalists in jail, the group found 262 journalists behind bars around the world in relation to their work, a new record after a historic high of 259 last year.

The census only accounted for journalists in government custody on December 1, not those imprisoned and released throughout the year or those who have disappeared or are being held captive by nonstate groups.

<https://www.rferl.org/a/tajikistan-cpj-mirsaidov-urges-release-journalist/28917527.html>