

URGENT ACTION

TAJIKISTANI PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE RELEASED

On 22 August, independent journalist and prisoner of conscience Khairullo (Khayrullo) Mirsaidov received a non-custodial sentence and was released in the courtroom, after spending more than eight months behind bars. He had been detained and prosecuted following his allegations of government corruption.

On 22 August, Soghd Regional Court reviewed the case against **Khairullo (Khayrullo) Mirsaidov** on appeal and ruled to release him. The court replaced his jail term with a fine of 80,000 somoni (US\$ 8,500) under Article 245 of the Tajikistani Criminal Code (embezzlement or misappropriation of state funds) and Article 340 (forgery of documents, stamps, signatures), and also sentenced him to two years of community service under Article 346 (2) (making deliberately false accusations). This means that 20 percent of any money he earns will be automatically transferred to the state budget.

While during the trial Khairullo Mirsaidov 'admitted' to some of the charges against him relating to misappropriation of funds and forgery of documents, he maintained that his arrest and trial were in retaliation for his criticism of the local authorities in Khudzhand. Amnesty International has reason to believe his admission to charges in relation to misappropriation of funds and forgery of documents was not genuine.

Khairullo Mirsaidov was released in the courtroom and reunited with his family and friends who were waiting outside the court building. During the 22 August hearing, the judge did not allow anyone apart from lawyers into the courtroom with no explanation given. Family, media, diplomats, and representatives of international organizations had to wait outside the court building. Khairullo Mirsaidov credits his release to the success of the international campaign on his behalf. Khairullo Mirsaidov is planning to appeal the decision of the Regional Court.

Khairullo Mirsaidov was held in SIZO 1, a pre-trial detention facility in Khudzhand, the main city of Soghd Region in northern Tajikistan, since 5 December 2017. The Prosecutor's Office of Soghd Region instigated criminal proceedings against Khairullo Mirsaidov after he had published an open letter in November 2017 addressed to the President and the Prosecutor General of Tajikistan, as well as to the Chairman of Soghd Region, containing corruption allegations against local officials in Khudzhand.

Amnesty International will continue to call on the Tajikistani authorities to immediately quash Khairullo Mirsaidov's conviction and to undertake a thorough, impartial and independent investigation into his allegations of government corruption.

Many thanks to all those who sent appeals. We will continue to monitor the situation, however no further action required from the UA network at this time.

This is the first update of UA 139/18. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur60/8819/2018/en/

Name: Khairullo (Khayrullo) Mirsaidov
Gender m/f: m

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