

# URGENT ACTION

## PHD STUDENT ARRESTED, HELD INCOMMUNICADO

**Tajikistani national Alexander Sodiqov, who is a resident in Canada, was arrested on 16 June in eastern Tajikistan while conducting academic research. There are fears for his safety and concerns that he may face torture or other ill-treatment.**

**Alexander Sodiqov**, who lives in Canada, was detained on 16 June by two State Committee for National Security officers in Khorogh, capital of eastern Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO). He has not been heard from since he rang his wife on 16 June at 9.30 pm local time. He did not tell her where he was being held.

He has not been heard from since. He is not known to have been able to contact a lawyer.

Alexander Sodiqov is a PhD student at the University of Toronto. He had been conducting research for a British Economic and Social Research Council project called Rising Powers and Conflict Management in Central Asia which involves the Universities of Exeter and Newcastle. He was detained while conducting a research interview with a civil society activist and deputy head of the Social Democratic Party of GBAO, Alim Sherzamonov.

On 17 June police went into his mother's home in the capital, Dushanbe, searched it and removed computer and storage equipment. On 17 June, the State Committee for National Security (SCNS) issued a statement accusing him of spying for foreign governments. According to Asia Plus and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Alexander Sodiqov appeared on local television in Badakhshan on the evening of 18 June and the following morning talking about the situation in GBAO. Radio Free Europe's reports said that some observers felt the television footage had been edited. On 19 June the head of the SCNS, Saimumin Yatimov, made a statement saying that foreign spies were operating in Tajikistan under the guise of NGOs and trying to undermine safety and security in the country.

Alexander Sodiqov has now been held for 72 hours and under Tajikistani law he should be charged or released.

### **Please write immediately in Tajik, Russian, English or your own language:**

- Urging the authorities to reveal Alexander Sodiqov's whereabouts immediately, as 72 hours has passed since he was detained and he must be either charged or released immediately;
- Urging them to ensure that he has unrestricted and confidential access to a lawyer of his choice in line with Tajikistan's national law and international obligations;
- Calling on them to ensure that he has immediate access to any medical attention he may require.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 31 JULY 2014 TO:**

President

Emomali Rahmon  
80 Rudaki Street  
Dushanbe 734023  
Tajikistan  
Fax: +992 372 21 68 00  
Email: mail@president.tj

**Salutation: Dear President Rahmon**

Prosecutor General

Sherkhon Salimzoda  
126, A. Sino Avenue  
Dushanbe 734043, Tajikistan  
(Mark faxes and emails, "Please forward to Prosecutor General")  
Fax: +992 372 21 02 59  
Email: info@mfa.tj

**Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General**

Chairman, State Committee for National

Security  
Saimymin Yatimov  
Ministry of Security  
Ul Gorkogo 8  
734025 Dushanbe  
Tajikistan  
Fax: +992 372 21 23 12

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:**

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Clashes on 21 May 2014 left at least three people dead, including a police officer, and seven people injured. The fatalities took place during a police operation against suspected criminals and led to clashes between the security forces and local residents. On 24 May, one person was killed and two injured when protesters attacked a building of the security forces in Khorogh. Protesters left the central square in Khorogh on 26 May.

Gorno-Badakhshan is an autonomous province in eastern Tajikistan. It is home to only three percent of Tajikistan's population, most of whom are followers of Ismailism, a branch of Shi'ite Islam, while the rest of the Tajikistani population mainly consider themselves Sunni Muslims.

In July 2012, dozens of people including civilians, are believed to have been killed and injured in clashes between government forces and local militants following the fatal stabbing of a security official.

Some residents of GBAO are calling for a thorough investigation into the events of 2012 in GBAO and believe that some of the people involved in the events have been blacklisted by the Tajikistani authorities.

Amnesty International has documented cases from Tajikistan which suggest that people detained in SNCS facilities are at particular risk of human rights violations; including torture and other ill-treatment and that access to lawyers of their own choice is often denied.

Name: Alexander Sodiqov

Gender m/f: m

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