

URGENT ACTION

UZBEK COMMUNITY LEADER GOES MISSING

Salim Shamsiddinov, a lawyer and leader of the Uzbek community in southern Tajikistan's Khatlon Region, went missing on 15 March in what may have been a political abduction.

His family last saw **Salim Shamsiddinov**, aged 58, at 6.30 am on 15 March as he went out to do some exercise, dressed in an old tracksuit. When he did not return, they registered him with the police as missing the next day.

Salim Shamsiddinov's disappearance could have been a politically motivated abduction. He was severely beaten on 5 May 2012 by a group of three or four men on the street, opposite the Khatlon Department of the State Committee for National Security building. Local sources have linked this attack to media interviews that Salim Shamsiddinov had given, claiming that Tajikistan's government was pursuing nationalistic policies. The leader of the opposition Social-Democratic Party, Rahmatillo Zoirov, has told the media that the disappearance of Salim Shamsiddinov appears to be politically motivated, and is connected with Salim Shamsiddinov's active participation in a lobbying group to change the laws on the presidential election and his call for ethnic Uzbeks in Tajikistan to vote for Rahmatillo Zoirov in November's presidential elections.

At the time he went missing, Salim Shamsiddinov was preparing to talk to the press again on issues about discrimination against ethnic Uzbeks in the Khatlon region.

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

- Expressing concern that Salim Shamsiddinov, an active supporter of the political opposition, has gone missing, months before the Presidential elections in Tajikistan;
- Calling on the authorities to promptly investigate the disappearance of Salim Shamsiddinov and establish his whereabouts, making the progress of such investigations public;
- If Salim Shamsiddinov is in state custody, asking the government to urgently disclose his whereabouts and ensure that he has immediate access to his family, legal representation of his choice and any medical assistance he may require.
- Urging the authorities to ensure that political activists, their supporters and relatives are able to campaign peacefully in the run up to the presidential elections without fear of harassment, intimidation or other reprisals.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 7 MAY 2013 TO:

President

I. S. Rakhmon
Dom Pravitelstva
Pr. Rudaki 80
734023 Dushanbe
Tajikistan
Fax: +992 37 221 69 71
Email: mail@president.tj

(Via website): <http://www.president.tj/en>

Salutation: Dear President Rakhmon

Minister of Internal Affairs

R. Rahimov
29 Tekhron Street
734025 Dushanbe
Tajikistan
Fax: +992 372 21 26 48
Salutation: Dear Minister

And copies to:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

H. Zaripov
42 Rudaki Avenue
734051 Dushanbe
Tajikistan
Fax: +992 372 21 02 59 (keep trying)
Email: info@mfa.tj

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

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

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Tajikistan is a landlocked country bordering with China, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, with an estimated population of 7.2 million. It gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. The economic decline of the country after the collapse of the Soviet Union was compounded by a devastating civil war, lasting from 1992 to 1997. President Emomali Rahmon, in power since 1994, has been successful in consolidating Tajikistan after the civil war. He views himself as the indispensable guarantor of stability and peace in the face of possible new unrest, especially with the unstable economic situation in the country and the politically unstable situation in neighbouring Afghanistan.

In advance of presidential elections in November this year, the Tajikistani authorities have been escalating their campaign to silence all critical voices through harassment, shutting down organizations and websites, and seeking extradition of opposition party members. Torture is pervasive in Tajikistan and in November 2012, the UN Committee against Torture noted “numerous and consistent allegations ... of routine use of torture and ill-treatment of suspects, principally to extract confessions”. Reports of the torture methods include the use of electric shocks, boiling water, suffocation, beatings and burning with cigarettes. There were reports of rape and threats of rape of both female and male detainees, as well as psychological torture.

In Tajikistan, enforced disappearances were very serious problem during the 1992–1997 civil war. Although the Tajikistani authorities do not currently consider enforced disappearances to be a problem, there have been reports of enforced disappearances as part of the military operation in the city of Khorog in August 2012.

Uzbeks are Tajikistan's largest ethnic minority, making up more than 15 percent of the country's population.

For further information see the report *Shattered Lives: Torture and other Ill-treatment in Tajikistan* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR60/004/2012/en>), and briefing *No Justice, No Protection: Torture and Other Ill-treatment by Law Enforcement Officials in Tajikistan* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR60/005/2012/en/cefa008a-7410-4d48-90df-7739d43f82c9/eur600052012en.pdf>).

Name: Salim Shamsiddinov

Gender m/f: m

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