

25th Session of the Working Group of the UPR

UPR of Tajikistan

Statement by Austria

Austria welcomes H.E. ... and the delegation of Tajikistan to the UPR and appreciates the submission and presentation of its national report.

We welcome the improvements with regard to the situation of juveniles in detention since the adoption of the National Action Plan on Juvenile Justice 2010-2015 as well as Tajikistan's efforts to eliminate child labor.

Austria is however deeply worried about the deteriorating human rights situation over the last year, in particular actions taken by the government targeting political opposition and lawyers as well as limiting media freedom and freedom of religion.

Austria is also concerned about the fate of Mr. Zayd Saidov, who (was a candidate for the Austrian Honorary Consul in Dushanbe and) has been sentenced to 26 years in prison for alleged embezzlement and polygamy. In this context, we're also alarmed by the general situation of lawyers in Tajikistan. Mr. Saidov's lawyer Shukhrat Kudratov or IRPT-lawyer Buzurgmehr Yorov are only two of many lawyers that have been sentenced to long-term imprisonment for alleged transgressions.

Also Tajikistan's media is faced by an intimidating environment and self-censorship is widespread. The numerous restrictions on freedom of expression and the practice of arbitrarily blocking websites and networks are a clear violation of international human rights standards.

Austria therefore recommends:

- to allow peaceful opposition groups and parties to operate freely and exercise their rights to freedom of assembly, association, expression, and religion, in accordance with international human rights norms;
- to refrain from and prevent any executive interference with lawyers' conduct of their professional duties;
- to engage in bringing Tajikistan's legislation in line with the countries' international and OSCE commitments to protect freedom of religion
- to rescind undue restrictions on the media and access to information, including on the internet, and tolerate all forms of legitimate speech, including criticism of the government and its policies

I thank you.