



BY AIRMAIL

His Excellency Mr. Rustam Shomurodovich
Minister of Justice of the Republic of Tajikistan
Ministry of Justice
25 Rudaki Avenue
734025 DUSHANBE, **TAJIKISTAN**

Amsterdam, 4 November 2015

Subject: Arrest of lawyer Buzurgmehr Yorov

Your Excellency,

Lawyers for Lawyers is an independent and non-political Dutch foundation that seeks to promote the proper functioning of the rule of law by pursuing freedom and independence of the legal profession.

Lawyers for Lawyers is concerned about the arrest and detention of lawyer Buzurgmehr Yorov. We have reason to believe that his arrest is connected to his legitimate activities as attorney.

According to our information, Atty. Yorov was arrested and detained on 28 September 2015. The authorities charged him with fraud and document forgery under articles 140 and 340 of Tajikistan's criminal code. An Internal Affairs Ministry spokesperson said the alleged fraud occurred in July 2010, when Yorov had purportedly received US\$4,000 from a resident of the city of Istaravshan.

At the time of his arrest, Atty. Yorov had just started to represent thirteen senior leaders of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT). They were arrested by the authorities on various charges on September 16. The IRPT had been the only Islamic political party legally registered in Central Asia before the Supreme Court of Tajikistan on September 29, banned the party and declared it a terrorist organization.

Lawyers for Lawyers, as well as other organizations, fear that Atty. Yorov's arrest may be related to his legal representation and defence of the thirteen leaders of the IRPT.

This case is not an isolated one; Yorov is at least the third Tajik lawyer that has been arrested, imprisoned on politically motivated charges, or subjected to serious harassment in the last two years. On 13 January 2015, lawyer Sukhrat Qudratov was convicted to 9 years in prison on charges of fraud and bribery. In 2014, another lawyer, Fakhriddin Zokirov, was arrested and tried on charges of fraud in banking transactions. He was released as a part of an act of amnesty in November 2014. Both lawyers were representing the former Minister Zaid Saidov, who was arrested in November 2013 after announcing the creation of a new opposition party in the run up to the December 2013 presidential elections. Their arrest and the conviction of Sukhrat Qudratov may be related to their legal assistance and defence of the former Minister. By letter of 2 February 2015 to your office, we expressed our concerns about the situation of these lawyers.



As a member of the United Nations Assembly, Tajikistan is bound by the UN Basic Principles of the Role of Lawyers adopted by the Assembly in 1990. We would draw your attention to Articles 16 and 18 of the Principles in particular which state that:

16. Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference (...) and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

18. Lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions.

In view of the above, Lawyers for Lawyers respectfully urge you to:

1. Immediately release Buzurgmehr Yorov or present credible and internationally recognizable charges against him.
2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all lawyers in Tajikistan are able to carry out their legitimate activities without fear of reprisals, intimidation, threats and free of all restrictions.

Thank you for your attention to this very important matter. We are confident that the Tajik government will give this case the attention it deserves and we will continue to monitor this case closely.

On behalf of the President of Lawyers for Lawyers, Phon van den Biesen,

Yours sincerely,

Lawyers for Lawyers



Adrie van de Streek
Executive director

A copy of this letter was sent to:

- Human Rights Ombudsman of Tajikistan
- Netherlands mission to Tajikistan in Astana, Kazakhstan