

14 December 2017

Tajikistan: Detention of human rights defender Khayrullo Mirsaidov

On 5 December 2017, the regional Prosecutor General's office arrested and detained an independent journalist and head of a local comedy troupe **Khayrullo Mirsaidov** in Khujand.

[Khayrullo Mirsaidov](#) is an independent journalist and political analyst over the past 17 years. He has reported for *Deutsche Welle*, *Asia-Plus*, and the *Fergana* media outlets, among others. Khayrullo Mirsaidov has often written about human rights issues, ecological problems, and respect for ethnic minorities. He also worked as a media development trainer on projects sponsored by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Department for International Development (DFID), and the Index on Censorship.

On 5 December 2017, the regional Prosecutor General's office arrested and detained Khayrullo Mirsaidov in Khujand, in Tajikistan's northern Sughd region, on charges of embezzlement under part 4b of the Article 245, incitement of interethnic, national, or religious hatred under part 2g of the Article 189, forgery under part 1 of the Article 340, and providing false testimony under part 2a of the Article 346 of the Criminal Code . If found guilty, he can face up to 21 years of imprisonment. The charges were brought after Khayrullo Mirsaidov published an open letter to Tajikistan's President to draw his attention to the corruption of local authorities.

On 10 November 2017, Khayrullo Mirsaidov wrote an [open letter](#) to President Emomali Rahmon, Prosecutor General Yusuf Rahmon, and the Head of the Sughd region Abdurakhmon Kodiri, asking them to investigate the alleged attempts by Olim Zohidzoda, Head of the Sughd Department of Youth and Sport, to solicit a US\$ 1,000 bribe from the funds Sughd authorities allocated to the local youth satirical comedy troupe managed by Khayrullo Mirsaidov.

Following the publication, tax authorities and the Prosecutor General's office simultaneously began investigating the team. Head of the Sughd Department of Youth and Sport accused Khayrullo Mirsaidov of embezzling the funds.

Front Line Defenders condemns the arrest and detention of Khayrullo Mirsaidov, as it believes they are solely linked to his open and public denunciation of corruption in Tajikistan.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Tajikistan to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release human rights defender Khayrullo Mirsaidov and drop all charges against him;
2. Ensure Khayrullo Mirsaidov to be free from the ill treatment, while in detention and have access to a lawyer, and should move promptly to secure his release, adheres to the conditions set out in the '*Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment*', adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;

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3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Tajikistan are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.

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