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UA -Tajikistan: Human rights defender Manuchehr Kholiknazarov sentenced for 15 years and woman human rights defender Ulfatkhonim Mamadshoeva for 21 years of imprisonment

On 9 December 2022, it was reported that the Supreme Court of Tajikistan had sentenced human rights defender **Manuchehr Kholiknazarov** for 15 years of prison time and woman human rights defender **Ulfatkhonim Mamadshoeva** for 21 years of prison time in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The trial was held behind closed doors and they attended it from prison and without access to their lawyers or the evidence used against them. There is currently no information regarding on what charges they were convicted or whether they will appeal this decision.

[Manuchehr Kholiknazarov](#) is a human rights lawyer who leads the Pamir Lawyers Association, a member of the Civil Society Coalition against Torture and Impunity in Tajikistan, and of “Commission 44”. [Ulfatkhonim Mamadshoeva](#) is a prominent woman human rights defender in the Gorno-Badakhshan region. She is a representative of the indigenous Pamiri minority group and an independent journalist – working with “Asia Plus”, “Argumenti Nedeli”, and has collaborated with “Ferghana”. In recent years, Ulfatkhonim Mamadshoeva founded the NGO, “Nomus va Insof”, where she had focused on children’s rights, upbringing and education, and women’s rights.

On 9 December 2022, it was reported that the Supreme Court of Tajikistan had sentenced human rights defender Manuchehr Kholiknazarov for 15 years and woman human rights defender Ulfatkhonim Mamadshoeva for 21 years. On 9 December 2022, sources reported to Radio Ozodi, that woman human rights defender Ulfatkhonim Mamadshoeva was sentenced earlier in the week. The trial for both Manuchehr Kholiknazarov and Ulfatkhonim Mamadshoeva was held behind closed doors where they had no access to their lawyers or the evidence used against them. The woman human rights defender’s trial was held in a security services detention centre and the materials of her case were classified as “secret”.

The press service of the Supreme Court did not comment on the verdict. There is currently no other information regarding on what charges they were convicted or whether they will appeal this decision. Additionally, the lawyers were made sign non-disclosure agreements and their families received no full information concerning their prosecution and were not allowed to attend the trial. They both currently remain detained in pre-trial detention No.1 in the city of Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

On 24 May 2022, the Tajik State TV broadcasted a video of Ulfatkhonim Mamadshoeva, where she had publicly confessed to organising the peaceful protests in Khorog with the support of an opposition leader in exile. On 20 May 2022, the woman human rights defender was accused of “public calls of violent change of the constitutional order” as per Part 2, Article 307 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Tajikistan. On 18 May 2022, Ulfatkhonim Mamadshoeva was arbitrarily arrested by the State Commission for the State Security of Tajikistan and members of the General Prosecutor’s Office. On 17 May 2022, the Ministry of Interior of Tajikistan, issued a statement accusing woman human rights defender Ulfatkhonim Mamadshoeva, of co-organising an “illegal rally” and inciting violence on 16 May 2022 in the Administrative Centre of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous region (GBAO), in Khorog, Tajikistan.

On 6 June 2022, Manuchehr Kholiknazarov was transferred from the pre-trial detention centre to the detention centre of Tajikistan's State Committee of National Security. The human rights defender was being charged for "participation in a criminal association" as per Part 2, Article 187 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Tajikistan. On 28 May 2022, the human rights defender was interrogated for allegedly "receiving money from the banned National Alliance of Tajikistan" by the local Prosecutor's Office in Khorog, Tajikistan. The human rights defender was arbitrarily detained in a pre-detention centre under the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the sentencing of Manuchehr Kholiknazarov and Ulfatkhonim Mamadshoeva behind closed doors and calls the authorities to put an end to the ongoing judicial harassment against the woman human rights defender and human rights defender. Front Line Defenders additionally calls the authorities of Tajikistan to disclose the full information about the trials of Manuchehr Kholiknazarov and Ulfatkhonim Mamadshoeva.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities of Tajikistan to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Manuchehr Kholiknazarov and Ulfatkhonim Mamadshoeva and drop all charges against them, as Front Line Defenders believes that they are being charged solely as a result of peaceful and legitimate human rights work;
2. Ensure the psychological and physical integrity of the human rights defenders while in detention;
3. Ensure transparency and accessibility of the Court system of Tajikistan to national and international human rights actors and independent media;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all journalist and human rights defenders in Tajikistan are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear or reprisals and free of all restrictions, including arbitrary arrest and judicial harassment.