

EXTERNAL

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EXTRA 12/98

Medical concern/political prisoner

3 February 1998

TAJIKISTAN

Abdulkhafiz Abdullayev, aged 46

Amnesty International is gravely concerned at reports that Abdulkhafiz Abdullayev, in detention in Tajikistan since May 1997, is critically ill and is not receiving the necessary medical attention his condition requires. It is feared that he may be in imminent danger of dying.

Abdulkhafiz Abdullayev is the younger brother of Abdumalik Abdullojanov, a former Prime Minister and head of the opposition National Revival Bloc. Reportedly, he was detained in late May 1997 and charged with illegal possession of narcotics. It was subsequently reported that he had been charged in connection with an assassination attempt on the President of Tajikistan in the Leninabad regional capital Khujand in April 1997.

In October 1997, 19 men were put on trial for allegedly creating an illegal armed formation in Khujand with the purpose of carrying out armed assaults on state representatives. Supporters of Abdulkhafiz Abdullayev claimed that the motive for his inclusion in this criminal case and for the charges against him was to intimidate the Khujand-based opposition. Unconfirmed reports stated that co-defendants alleged in court that during the investigation they had been forced under duress to incriminate Abdulkhafiz Abdullayev.

The condition of Abdulkhafiz Abdullayev, who underwent surgery for cancer of the liver in 1994, deteriorated rapidly in detention and in August the Oktyabrsky District Court of Dushanbe reportedly ordered his immediate release on medical grounds to allow for urgent specialized treatment. However, he was not released from detention and, according to unofficial sources, the judge who ordered his release was subsequently dismissed. Official medical assessments of his condition confirmed that the cancer had progressed and that he needed immediate hospitalization in a specialized medical institution. Nevertheless there were reports that Abdulkhafiz Abdullayev was forced to attend trial and that towards the end of the year he was being carried into the courtroom because he was too ill to walk. According to unofficial sources he did not attend court hearings in the last week of January 1998 and there are fears that he may be very close to death.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

More than five years of civil war in Tajikistan formally ended in late June 1997 with the signing in Moscow by President Imomali Rakhmonov and United Tajik Opposition (UTO) leader Sayed Abdullo Nuri of a General Agreement on Peace and National Accord. The agreement provided for a National Reconciliation Commission (NRC), to be made up of an equal number of government and UTO representatives, to be in charge among other things of preparing new parliamentary elections in 1998. The National Revival Bloc, having declared itself a "third force" in Tajik politics following its foundation in July 1996 and having demanded to be party to the peace negotiations, has remained marginalized and has been excluded from the NRC.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in Russian, English or your own language:

- expressing your grave concern at reports that Abdulkhafiz Abdullayev's health is in a critical condition and that, despite this, he continues to be held in pre-trial detention;
- urging that he receive appropriate medical attention immediately, including being moved to a specialized hospital.

APPEALS TO:

1) The President of Tajikistan, Imomali Sharipovich Rakhmonov
Respublika Tajikistan
g. Dushanbe
Apparat Prezidenta
Prezidentu RAKHMONOVU I.Sh.
TAJIKISTAN

Telegrams: Prezidentu Rakhmonovu, Dushanbe, Tajikistan
Salutation: Dear President

2) The Minister of Internal Affairs, Khumdin Khasanovich Sharifov
Respublika Tajikistan
g. Dushanbe
ul. Dzherzhinskogo, 29
Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del
Ministru SHARIFOVU Kh.Kh.
TAJIKISTAN

Telegrams: Ministru vnutrennikh del Sharifovu, Dushanbe, Tajikistan
Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

The Procurator General, Salomiddin Sharopov
Respublika Tajikistan
734022 g. Dushanbe
prospekt A. Sino, 126
Prokuratura Respubliki Tajikistan
Generalnomu prokuroru SHAROPOVU S.
TAJIKISTAN

The Foreign Minister, Talbak Nazarovich Nazarov
Respublika Tajikistan
734051 g. Dushanbe
Ministerstvo inostrannykh del
Ministru NAZAROVU T.
Fax: +7 3772-23 29 64; +7 3772-21 02 59

and to diplomatic representatives of Tajikistan accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 3 March 1998.