

EXTERNAL

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"Disappearance"

18 March 1997

TAJIKISTAN

Rizoali OJIYEV (???????? in cyrillic), aged 34

Gadoali OJIYEV (????????), aged 30

Brothers Rizoali Ojiyev and Gadoali Ojiyev have apparently "disappeared" in Tajikistan since being detained by people who are believed to be law enforcement officials on 28 February - 1 March 1997. Appeals to Tajik officials by friends of the brothers have failed to produce information as to their whereabouts.

Rizoali and Gadoali Ojiyev run a business in the northern city of Khujand importing food and other goods for distribution in the eastern region of Gorno-Badakhshan, a desperately poor part of Tajikistan from which they originate. Gadoali Ojiyev was detained on 28 February in the town of Kanibadam, near Khujand, while on a business trip, in circumstances that are unclear. On the same day Rizoali Ojiyev was detained by police in Khujand and held for questioning for the rest of the day. At around 3am on 1 March his neighbours saw him being brought home in a police car, but reportedly only moments afterwards a group of armed masked men who had been in another car waiting outside Rizoali Ojiyev's home seized him and drove him away.

The Ojiyev brothers are members of the Badakhshani ethnic group. At the height of Tajikistan's civil war in late 1992 large numbers of this ethnic group were targeted for extrajudicial execution or "disappearance", Badakhshanis having been identified as sympathetic to the side which lost power at the end of the civil war. Rizoali Ojiyev was living and running a business in Moscow, Russia, at the time of the civil war, and his brother Gadoali joined him there after fleeing Tajikistan because of fears for his own safety. However, without proper legal status in Russia they found themselves subjected to frequent harassment by police in Moscow. Consequently, in 1995 the brothers returned to Tajikistan and opened an office in Dushanbe. However, reportedly after being subjected to surveillance and threats by law enforcement agents they relocated to Khujand. They claimed to have recently found themselves under surveillance in Khujand also.

The reasons for their detention are unclear, but associates of the Ojiyev brothers claim that it is because of links to the political opposition in 1992-93, and that the government may suspect them of involvement with armed opposition groups which have waged an insurgency campaign since then. Those who know the brothers deny the existence of any such involvement in political violence. It has also been stated that Rizoali Ojiyev is an influential figure in the Badakhshani community (he was a member of the last parliament of the Soviet Union), and may therefore be viewed with suspicion in some official quarters.

Rizoali and Gadoali Ojiyev are both married, with two and three children respectively. Their families are in Russia.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Civil war in 1992, and a subsequent armed insurgency, have left thousands of people dead in Tajikistan. Appalling human rights abuses are alleged to

have been committed by all sides, including numerous enforced "disappearances", particularly in 1992-93, which remain unresolved. Peace talks on ending the insurgency have made significant progress since December 1996, with a number of accords having been reached in principle on achieving national reconciliation, including an amnesty for people accused of crimes connected with the conflict. However, this has not prevented recent arrests of suspected government opponents.

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

- calling on the authorities to clarify the whereabouts of Rizoali Ojiyev and Gadoali Ojiyev, and, if they are in detention, to release them immediately if they are not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee the physical safety and well-being of Rizoali Ojiyev and Gadoali Ojiyev, noting that victims of "disappearance" are especially vulnerable to torture and extrajudicial execution.

APPEALS TO:

1) The President of Tajikistan, Imamali Sharipovich Rakhmonov

Respublika Tajikistan

g. Dushanbe

Apparat Prezidenta Respubliki

Tajikistan

Prezidentu RAKHMONOVU I.Sh.

TAJIKISTAN

Telegrams: Prezidentu Rakhmonovu, Dushanbe, Tajikistan

Salutation: Dear President

2) The Minister of Security, Major-General Saydamir Zukhurov

Respublika Tajikistan

g. Dushanbe

Ministerstvo bezopasnosti

Respubliki Tajikistan

Ministru ZUKHUROVU S.

TAJIKISTAN

Telegrams: Ministru bezopasnosti Zukhurovu, Dushanbe, Tajikistan

Salutation: Dear Minister

3) The Minister of Internal Affairs, Khumdin Khasanovich Sharifov

Respublika Tajikistan

g. Dushanbe

ul. Dzherzhinskogo, 29

Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del

Respubliki Tajikistan

Ministru SHARIFOVU Kh.Kh.

TAJIKISTAN

Telegrams: Ministru vnutrennikh del Sharifovu, Dushanbe, Tajikistan

Salutation: Dear Minister

4) The Procurator General, Salomiddin Sharopov

Respublika Tajikistan

734022 g. Dushanbe

prospekt A. Sino, 126
Prokuratura Respubliki Tajikistan
Generalnomu prokuroru SHAROPOVU S.
TAJIKISTAN

Telegrams: Generalnomu prokuroru Sharopovu, Dushanbe, Tajikistan

Salutation: Dear Procurator General

COPIES TO:

The Foreign Minister, Talbak Nazarovich Nazarov

Respublika Tajikistan

734051 g. Dushanbe

Ministerstvo inostrannykh del

Ministru NAZAROVU T.

Telegrams: Ministru inostrannykh del Nazarovu, Dushanbe, Tajikistan

Salutation: Dear Minister

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 29 April 1997.