

## **For Immediate Release**

### **Tajikistan: Lawyer Wrongfully Held for a Decade**

#### ***Free Buzurgmehr Yorov and All Others Held for Exercising their Human Rights***

(September 29, 2025) – Tajikistan’s authorities have wrongfully imprisoned a human rights lawyer for 10 years for exercising his human rights, 12 organizations said today. Buzurgmehr Yorov is serving a 23-year prison sentence because of his work representing political opposition leaders.

Tajikistan’s authorities should quash Yorov’s conviction and sentence and release him immediately. The authorities should also release all other prisoners, including lawyers, arbitrarily and unjustifiably detained for peacefully exercising their human rights.

Yorov, 54, earned a reputation as one of the most fearless human rights lawyers in Tajikistan by taking on high-profile legal cases, representing individuals prosecuted by the government on politically motivated charges. In early September 2015, Yorov began representing several members of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan. The party had been one of the few officially registered opposition parties in the country, but it was [labeled a terrorist organization and banned in September 2015](#).

On September 28, 2015, police [arrested Yorov](#), raided his home and legal office without a warrant, and ultimately charged him with forgery, fraud, “arousing national, racial, local or religious hostility,” and extremism. The charges appear to have been [prompted by an interview Yorov gave shortly before his arrest](#) in which he announced that one of his clients had been tortured in pre-trial detention and called for a coalition of lawyers to join him in representing the detained Islamic Renaissance Party members.

Yorov was held in pre-trial detention for eight months, where he was [beaten and held in solitary confinement](#). On October 6, 2016, after a trial riddled with due process violations, he was [sentenced to 23 years in prison](#). Since then, his sentence has [twice been shortened](#) under mass amnesties. However, authorities have repeatedly brought new, [trumped-up charges against him](#)—most recently in July 2023. The ensuing convictions have extended his sentence and pushed his expected release date to September 2043, by which time he will be 72 years old.

Like Yorov’s first trial, those that followed were rife with violations of fair-trial rights, including prohibiting Yorov from freely communicating with or receiving the assistance of counsel or presenting his own defense.

Yorov has been severely mistreated in prison, including through [torture](#), and held incommunicado. The authorities have restricted visits from his wife and reportedly pressured his family not to advocate on his behalf. In May 2019, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention [issued an opinion](#) stating that Tajikistan’s detention and treatment of Yorov

violated international law and calling for his immediate release. Nevertheless, he remains in prison.

Yorov's detention and abuse are indicative of a broader [human rights crisis](#) in Tajikistan. Under the decades-long rule of President Emomali Rahmon, the rule of law has been weakened in the country, and the authorities have become increasingly repressive. The decline accelerated further after November 2021, when the authorities initiated a violent campaign to repress protests in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region, wiping out independent media and civil society in the region.

Dozens of lawyers, civic activists, journalists, community leaders, and others have been arrested and persecuted for politically motivated reasons in recent years, including journalists [Ulfatkhonim Mamadshoeva](#), [Mamadsulton Mavlonazarov](#), and [Ruhshona Khakimova](#), as well as human rights lawyer [Manuchehr Kholiknazarov](#).

Tajikistan's authorities should release Yorov immediately and unconditionally and release all other prisoners jailed on politically motivated charges. The government should abide by its obligations under international law to protect everyone's free and peaceful exercise of their human rights.

Tajikistan's international partners should use bilateral and multilateral diplomacy to raise Yorov's case and insist on his release.

#### **SIGNATORIES:**

Araminta

Amnesty International

CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation

Civil Rights Defenders

Freedom Now

Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights

Human Rights Watch

International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)

International Commission of Jurists

International Partnership for Human Rights

Lawyers for Lawyers (L4L)

Norwegian Helsinki Committee

**For more information, please contact:**

For Amnesty International, Alexander Artemyev: [alexander.artemyev@amnesty.org](mailto:alexander.artemyev@amnesty.org).

For CIVICUS: [media@civicus.org](mailto:media@civicus.org).

For Freedom Now, Daphne Panayotatos: [dpanayotatos@freedom-now.org](mailto:dpanayotatos@freedom-now.org).

For Human Rights Watch, Syinat Sultanalieva: [sultans@hrw.org](mailto:sultans@hrw.org).

For International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute: [IBAHRI@int-bar.org](mailto:IBAHRI@int-bar.org).

For International Partnership for Human Rights, Rachel Gasowski:  
[rachel.gasowski@iphronline.org](mailto:rachel.gasowski@iphronline.org).

For Lawyers for Lawyers: [info@lawyersforlawyers.org](mailto:info@lawyersforlawyers.org).

For Norwegian Helsinki Committee, Marius Fossum: [mf@nhc.no](mailto:mf@nhc.no).