

NGO REPORT FOR UN RIGHTS REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS TAJIKISTAN'S FAILURE TO PROTECT VULNERABLE GROUPS

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At its session in Geneva on 26-30 May 2014, the [UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) will begin its second review of Tajikistan since the country ratified the corresponding treaty. A report prepared for the review by a coalition of eight Tajik NGOs draws attention to the failure of the authorities of the Central Asian country to adequately protect the rights of women, labour migrants, children from disadvantaged families, disabled people, rural and economically weak residents and other vulnerable groups.

The issues detailed by the NGO report include:

- There is currently no comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation in Tajikistan.
- Traditions of early marriages and polygamous marriages conducted through religious ceremonies continue to adversely affect the status of women.
- Domestic violence is a widespread problem. A law on preventing domestic violence adopted in 2013 has done little to improve the situation due to significant shortcomings and the lack of resources for its implementation.
- There is significant gender discrimination in the labour market and the gender gap in wages is one of the highest in the former Soviet Union: on average women earn only some 60% of what men earn.
- Employment in the informal economy and wage arrears are common in the labour market, and it is estimated that the real unemployment rate may be as high as 25%.
- Due to the lack of economic opportunities, labour migration above all to Russia remains extensive. According to official statistics, some 800.000 labour migrants left Tajikistan in 2013, while remittances sent home by labour migrants amounted to about half of the national GDP, which is one of the highest rates in the world.
- Many Tajik labour migrants have an undocumented status, which makes them especially vulnerable to exploitation and human rights violations. Bilateral treaties signed by Tajikistan and Russia in this area offer limited protection.
- Back home in Tajikistan there are an increasing number of families who have been abandoned by bread-winning migrant workers, leaving them struggling to make ends meet without receiving state support.
- The situation of disabled people is still extremely difficult. Most disabled people and their families live below the poverty line, while most disability benefits laid down by law are not granted in practice.

- Primary and secondary education is free by law, but costs for extra classes and textbooks mean that children from poor families cannot fully benefit from the school program. Because of the low level of salaries paid to teachers, there is also an acute shortage of qualified pedagogical staff in schools.
- The situation concerning access to education for ethnic minorities is particularly worrisome due to the lack of teachers and textbooks for instruction in minority languages, but also due to the reduction in recent years of the number of schools and classes in these languages.
- Especially residents in rural and economically disadvantaged areas are affected by lack of access to quality public health care and basic services such as electricity and safe drinking water. Public health care expenditure amounts to less than 2% of the country's GDP, access to electricity was limited to five hours a day in rural areas in the 2013-14 winter months, and some 40% of the population does not have access to safe drinking water.

The NGO report was prepared by the following Tajik NGOs: The Bureau on Human Rights and Rule of Law; the Human Rights Center; the Child's Rights Center; Nota Bene; the Rights and Prosperity Association; the Independent Centre of Protection of Human Rights; the Association of Young Lawyers *Amparo*; and the Society of Persons with Disabilities *Imkoniyat* ("Opportunity").

Representatives of these NGOs will be present at the Committee's session in Geneva to brief members on the issues and recommendations covered in their report, as well as to provide additional information. The Committee is due to adopt a so-called list of issues that the Tajik authorities will be requested to respond to ahead of the final stage of the review, which is expected to take place next spring and will involve a face-to-face dialogue with representatives of the Tajik government.

Read a [summary of the NGO report](#).

Read the [full NGO report](#).

This release has been prepared by International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR) as part of a joint project with Nota Bene, the coordinator of the Tajik NGO coalition submitting the joint CESCR report. Together with the Netherlands Helsinki Committee, IPHR has also provided assistance in the preparation of the NGO report, as well as in the organization of advocacy activities in Geneva.

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