

Monday, June 23, 2014

**STATEMENT CONCERNING THE DETENTION OF ACADEMIC RESEARCHER
ALEXANDER SODIQOV**

On behalf of the 4,500 constituent members of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies; the Association for the Study of Nationalities; and the Central Eurasian Studies Society—the largest transnational academic societies supporting regional studies—whose members conduct research in Eurasia and share interest in the situation in Tajikistan, we write to express our strong concern over the June 16 detention of our fellow academic researcher Alexander Sodiqov.

Sodiqov is a doctoral student in political science at the University of Toronto. He was in Tajikistan working on an Economic and Social Research Council (UK) funded project—“Rising Powers and Conflict Management in Central Asia”—and as a researcher in this project, he was employed by the University of Exeter. The research project was approved by the ethics committee of the University of Exeter in June 2013. The focus of the project is to study the management and resolution of conflicts in Central Asia and the research in Tajikistan involved collecting public statements by government and civil society organizations as well as conducting interviews with public officials and civil society leaders. The research is expected to bring benefit to Tajikistan by showing in international scholarship how Tajikistan developed practices of conflict resolution that extend back to the successful resolution of the civil war in 1997.

Sodiqov arrived in Dushanbe to begin research on Sunday, June 8, 2014. On Sunday, June 15, he traveled to Khorog and after conducting his first interview on Monday, June 16, he was arrested. As of Monday, June 23, we do not know what has prompted his arrest, but it would appear that his arrest is due to his research activities and possibly to research analysis that he has published previously. The arrest and detention of academic researchers is of great concern to all of our constituent members. Like Sodiqov, many of us conduct interview-based research in the region. His arrest and detention constitutes an infringement of intellectual freedom and sets a worrisome precedent for Tajikistan’s openness to the world. It has been reported that presidential advisor Mr. Khairulloev accepted that Sodiqov is an academic researcher and that he would be released. We thus join others in petitioning Mr. Yatimov, Chairperson of Tajikistan’s National Security Committee, to release Sodiqov posthaste.

Signed:

Board of Directors, Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies
Board of Directors, Association for the Study of Nationalities
Board of Directors, Central Eurasian Studies Society
Board of Directors, European Society for Central Asian Studies



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