

TAJIKISTAN

USCIRF-RECOMMENDED FOR COUNTRIES OF PARTICULAR CONCERN (CPC)

KEY FINDINGS

In 2025, religious freedom conditions in Tajikistan remained poor. As in years past, the Tajik government tightly controlled religious activities as part of its longstanding campaign to maintain political influence under the guise of combating “extremism.” Tajik officials particularly targeted independent Muslims who deviated from the state’s preferred interpretation of Hanafi Sunni Islam, including ethnically Pamiri Ismaili Shi’a Muslims and those allegedly affiliated with banned religious groups. In addition, the government intensified its efforts to protect state-sanctioned Islam by penalizing traditional spiritual practitioners.

Throughout the year, officials discriminately applied legislation to target peaceful religious activities and restrict freedom of religion or belief (FoRB). This restrictive legal framework includes the law On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations (religion law) and the law On Resistance to Extremism (extremism law). The religion law limits religious education, restricts religious materials, maintains discriminatory requirements for registering mosques and appointing Muslim clergy, and prohibits unregistered religious activity. Additionally, the extremism law defines “extremist” activities broadly and does not clearly require that such activities be violent or incite violence. Authorities penalized violators through detentions, fines, prison sentences, medical neglect, and physical abuse. USCIRF monitors the cases of 14 [FoRB victims](#) who were imprisoned or detained in 2025 on “extremism”-related charges due to their peaceful religious activities.

Tragically, several FoRB victims died in custody in 2025. For example, in October, Saidzham Rahmonov died while detained. Tajik authorities returned Rahmonov’s body to his family less than a week later and claimed he committed suicide. However, his body showed signs of torture, including a broken leg and electric shock marks. Officials told Rahmonov’s family that they detained him because he was planning a terrorist attack. Authorities were reportedly suspicious of Rahmonov’s beard and the contents of his phone,

which included religious videos and photos of his wife wearing a hijab. Also, Zubaydullah Raziq, a religious scholar and prominent member of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT), died in prison. In 2015, Raziq was [imprisoned](#) with dozens of other IRPT members for allegedly helping to organize a “rebellion,” a charge Raziq and the IRPT have denied. For over a decade, the Tajik government has consistently targeted those affiliated with the IRPT. Banned in 2015, the IRPT is a moderate, religiously based political party that has also served as a popular social movement and community organization.

Tajik officials imprisoned members of the ethnolinguistic Yazgolumi community based on unfounded “extremism” charges. For example, in June, a Dushanbe court sentenced five Yazgolumi individuals from Darvoz to between five and five and half years in prison on charges of “extremism” for allegedly promoting Salafism. Salafism is a religious ideology that is banned in Tajikistan, and the detainees’ relatives denied any affiliation. The criminal case, however, accused the men of promoting Salafism while criticizing Tajik government policies. Officials additionally claimed the men harassed those who attended their local mosque by arguing that Tajik religious leaders were government mouthpieces. Also, during a closed trial in July, a judge sentenced Obid Quvvatbekov to five years in prison for inciting “extremism” online. Quvvatbekov is the nephew of an imprisoned, prominent Yazgolumi cleric, Mavlavi Abdullobek. Some believe Quvvatbekov was punished because of his uncle’s religious identity.

Officials also targeted those seemingly affiliated with Hizb ut-Tahrir, a religious group that is banned in Tajikistan. In May, the Bobojon Ghafurov District Court sentenced Farkhud Negmatov to eight years in prison for his alleged affiliation with Hizb ut-Tahrir. Negmatov’s relatives deny the Hizb ut-Tahrir ties and believe he was targeted for criticizing the Tajik government online and reposting videos about the Islamic Caliphate.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE U.S. GOVERNMENT

- Redesignate Tajikistan as a “country of particular concern,” or CPC, for engaging in systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom, as defined by the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA), and lift the waiver releasing the administration from taking otherwise legislatively mandated action as a result of the designation;
 - Impose targeted sanctions on government officials responsible for severe violations of religious freedom by freezing those individuals’ assets and/or barring their entry into the United States under human rights-related financial and visa authorities, citing specific religious freedom violations; and
 - Condition military-to-military engagements and economic partnerships on substantive improvement to the legal framework regulating religious activities.
- The U.S. Congress should:
- Raise Tajikistan’s religious freedom conditions by conducting relevant hearings and delegation visits, including through the bipartisan Senate Central Asia Caucus, Helsinki Commission, and Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission.

KEY USCIRF RESOURCES & ACTIVITIES

- **Hearing:** [Laws Regulating Religion in Central Asia](#)
- **Spotlight Podcast:** [The Abuse of Extremism Laws in Central Asia](#)
- **Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief [Victims List](#) and Appendix 2**

Background

Around 90 percent of Tajikistan’s population are Muslim, with the majority adhering to Hanafi Sunni Islam. Around four percent are ethnic Pamiris, who typically adhere to Ismaili Shi’a Islam and reside in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAO). The remainder of the population includes Christians, such as Russian Orthodox, Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Jehovah’s Witnesses, as well as Jews, Baha’is, and Zoroastrians.

Article 26 of the Tajik constitution guarantees the right to religious freedom; yet, the legal framework regulating religion restricts FoRB. In addition to the laws on religion and extremism, the law On Parental Responsibility in the Upbringing and Education of Children (parental responsibility law) prohibits children from participating in the activities of religious associations. The law On the Regulation of Traditions and Ceremonies (traditions law) also restricts holiday traditions, religious clothing, and religious ceremonies.

Targeting of Ismaili Muslims

Throughout the year, authorities continued a campaign to target the religious activities of ethnically Pamiri Ismaili Shi’a Muslims. In June, [Muzzafar Davlatmirov](#), a prominent Ismaili cleric imprisoned in 2022 for criticizing government violence against Pamiris in his sermons, died in custody due to medical neglect. Davlatmirov was 61 years old.

During the year, Tajik authorities continued efforts to isolate the Tajik Ismaili community from other Ismailis globally. In February, Prince Karim Al-Hussaini, the Aga Khan IV and spiritual leader of Ismaili Muslims globally, passed away. The next day, many Ismaili Muslims gathered at the Ismaili Center in Khorough, GBAO, to mourn his death and watch the live broadcast of the ceremony naming the new Aga Khan. Due to the crowd, some individuals listened to the ceremony via loudspeakers outside of the building. National Security Committee (NSC) police arrived and removed the loudspeakers as mourners gathered. At the other Ismaili Center based in Dushanbe, reportedly officials turned off the electricity in an effort to prevent them from holding the ceremony. Also, in July, the governor of GBAO, Alisher Mirzonabot, banned Pamiri athletes from the region from participating in the Ismaili festival Global Games in Dubai, United Arab Emirates “due to unspecified concerns.”

Regulation of Islam

The government continued to tightly control religious pilgrimages. Guidance from the Committee for Religion and Regulation of Celebrations and Ceremonies (SCRA) required anyone performing Hajj, an annual Islamic religious pilgrimage, to pay for their experience through Orienbank, a company run by President Emomali Rahmon’s brother-in-law. In addition, the Civil Service Agency chairman, Ilyas Idriszoda, advised government officials to wait until after retirement to perform Hajj, which some interpreted as a threat to their employment. Furthermore, officials continued to urge Tajiks to spend their money on public projects instead of on Hajj.

The Tajik government also restricts access to religious education and materials. Since 2013, the Islamic Institute of Tajikistan has

been the only institution where Muslims can pursue higher religious education in the country. Receiving religious education abroad without government permission is illegal. During the year, officials noted that 36 Tajiks received illegal religious education abroad, three of whom authorities have returned home. The religion law mandates that religious communities submit religious materials for state examination. In the first six months of 2025, the SCRA reported that it received 557 applications with religious materials to conduct examinations. Of those, officials determined 364 applications included signs of “extremism.”

Officials typically enforced the traditions law to ensure adherence to the state’s interpretation of Islam through fines and informational campaigns. In the first six months of 2025, Tajik officials fined around 600 individuals for violating the traditions law. In line with 2024 amendments, which banned the “import, sale, promotion and wearing of clothes alien to national culture,” a government working group conducted informational campaigns at the Vatan Shopping Center in Dushanbe on “foreign clothing.” Vatan Shopping Center vendors have stopped selling hijabs and Arab-style clothing since the amendments.

Crackdown on Belief Practices

During the year, the Tajik government, citing concerns for fraud, increased penalties for belief practices, which in turn affected ritual and ceremonial traditions deeply rooted in Tajik culture. Under international law, FoRB [protects](#) ritual and ceremonial acts giving direct expression to belief, including practices that draw on pre-Islamic cultural and traditional identity. In July, authorities introduced a fine of up to 4,500 somoni (\$485) under Administrative Code Article 482.1 for those who receive such services. In 2024, officials had already increased administrative penalties under Administrative Code Article 482 for those who engage in such practices and introduced criminal liability under Criminal Code Article 240.1 for repeat offenders. Official rhetoric that accompanied the tightening of legislation revealed the government’s intention of protecting its interpretation of Islam over the rights of traditional practitioners. In the first six months of 2025 alone, officials opened 495 cases against individuals under these provisions. At times, these charges resulted in prison sentences, such as case in June in which a woman was sentenced to six months’ imprisonment.

Key U.S. Policy

In November, within the C5+1 framework, President Donald J. Trump [met](#) with President Rahmon to discuss expanding economic and security cooperation, particularly in countering terrorism and violent radicalization. However, U.S. and Tajik officials did not engage on freedom of religion or belief during these discussions.

The U.S. Department of State last [redesignated](#) Tajikistan as a CPC under IRFA for particularly severe violations of religious freedom on December 29, 2023. Any presidential action taken as a result of this designation terminates by the end of 2025 unless expressly reauthorized by law.