

Tajikistan

by Edward Lemon

Capital: Dushanbe
Population: 8.3 Million
GNI/capita, PPP: US\$2,660

Source: World Bank *World Development Indicators*.

Nations in Transit Ratings and Averaged Scores

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
National Democratic Governance	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.50	6.50	7.00
Electoral Process	6.50	6.50	6.50	6.50	6.50	6.50	6.50	6.75	6.75	6.75
Civil Society	5.00	5.50	5.75	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.25	6.25	6.50	6.50
Independent Media	6.25	6.00	6.00	5.75	5.75	6.00	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25
Local Democratic Governance	5.75	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00
Judicial Framework and Independence	5.75	6.00	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.50	6.75
Corruption	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.50
Democracy Score	5.96	6.07	6.14	6.14	6.14	6.18	6.25	6.32	6.39	6.54

NOTE: The ratings reflect the consensus of Freedom House, its academic advisers, and the author(s) of this report. If consensus cannot be reached, Freedom House is responsible for the final ratings. The ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest. The Democracy Score is an average of ratings for the categories tracked in a given year. The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author(s).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tajikistan increasingly resembles a one-party state. The ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), led by President Emomali Rahmon, dominated parliamentary elections held in March 2015. Tajikistan's post-independence elections have been marred by corruption and the intimidation of opposition candidates, and these elections were no different. In the run-up to the election, the state media smeared the opposition parties, and the security services harassed candidates. On election day itself, observers recorded a number of violations, including multiple voting and ballot stuffing.

The country's leading opposition group, the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRPT), lost its two seats in the parliament in the elections. Following their defeat, party deputies began "voluntarily" resigning under pressure from local officials. Accused of fraud by the state media, party leader Muhiddin Kabiri remained outside of the country from April onwards. Finally, after years of pressure on the party, in a statement on 28 August the Ministry of Justice banned the IRPT, citing its lack of popular support and organization of illegal religious activities. The Ministry of Interior then blamed the party for a series of armed incidents in and around Dushanbe in early September, designating it a terrorist group. Security services arrested approximately 200 members of the IRPT from September onwards.

The government also took repressive action against other opposition movements. In January, Russian authorities extradited Youth for the Revival of Tajikistan leader Maksud Ibragimov. A leader of the opposition movement Group 24 was gunned down in Istanbul in 2015, with many suspecting the government's hand in the killing, and other party members are still being detained in Russia. Lawyers defending opposition members in Tajikistan have been detained and prosecuted. A court sentenced Shuhrat Qudratov, who defended jailed former minister of industry Zaid Saidov, to nine years in prison in January for bribing judges. Human rights lawyer Buzurgmehr Yorov was arrested in September just days after revealing that IRPT deputies had been tortured in detention.

Influenced by Russian thinking following events in Ukraine, the Tajik authorities continue to view civil society as a potential threat to regime security and social stability. A "foreign agents" bill similar to Russia's 2012 legislation passed into law in early 2015. The new law requires non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to gain approval from the government for any projects supported by external donors. While the implementation of the law remains inconsistent, it constitutes a further restriction on the activities of civil society in the country. Under the cover of a fight against extremism, the government continued to restrict the activities of outwardly religious citizens. Cases of police shaving men with beards and forcing women to remove their hijabs generated lively discussion on social media. The government continued to restrict free speech and block critical websites in 2015. Most journalists exercise self-censorship, and the media environment favors outlets linked to the state.

From traffic police soliciting small bribes to multi-million dollar embezzlement, corruption and cronyism pervade all levels of Tajik society. Corrupt officials control key public economic assets such as the Talco aluminum smelter and have created personal slush funds by diverting profits to offshore accounts. Even though a 2009 audit of the National Bank by Ernst and Young found that National Bank chief Muradali Alimardon had taken \$550 million in undeclared loans, new evidence from 2015 suggested that he had managed to take an additional \$120 million since then. While officials act with impunity, the government uses corruption charges to neutralize its opponents.

Tajikistan remains the poorest country in postcommunist Eurasia. Money sent back from migrants working outside of the country comprises over half of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). With Russia's economic recession, these remittances fell sharply in 2015, making life even more difficult for many Tajik households.

Score Changes:

- **National Democratic Governance rating declined from 6.50 to 7.00** due to the government's wide-ranging crackdown on political opposition, including the assassination of opposition leader Umarali Quvvatov in Istanbul and the banning of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan.
- **Judicial Framework and Independence rating declined from 6.50 to 6.75** due to the increasingly arbitrary and politicized use of the court system against opposition and their lawyers, journalists, and religious believers.
- **Corruption rating declined from 6.25 to 6.50** due to further consolidation of the presidential family's control over state institutions engaged in corruption.

As a result, Tajikistan's Democracy Score declined from 6.39 to 6.54.

Outlook for 2016: Even as it bans leading opposition movements, the government remains securely entrenched in power. President Rahmon's current term is due to run until 2020 and, with his new position of "leader of the nation," he will likely stay in control longer than that. The regime will continue to repress both secular and religious opposition in 2016. With remittances sent back from migrant laborers in Russia drying up, Tajik households will feel the strain in 2016. Unemployment will increase as thousands of migrants return home with limited prospects of finding work. Faced with dwindling economic fortunes and an increasingly authoritarian regime, disillusionment with the state of affairs will only grow in the coming year

MAIN REPORT

National Democratic Governance

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.50	6.50	7.00

- While the government claims to be building a democratic system serving the interests of the people, in reality the country increasingly resembles a one-party state.¹ The ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP) dominates the political field, and President Emomali Rahmon has held power since 1992. In December, a new law elevated Rahmon to the status of “leader of the nation,” guaranteeing legal impunity for him and his family.² Rahmon relies on a system of patronage, pliant judicial bodies, the monopolization of the production of information, and the State National Security Committee (GKNB), the country’s ruthless secret police, to maintain control.
- In 2015, the authorities made their final move against the country’s leading opposition party, the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRPT). After losing its two seats in the parliament in the March 2015 elections, IRPT deputies began “voluntarily” resigning and local offices were shut down. A number of deputies reported that they resigned under duress.³ In an August 28 statement, the Ministry of Justice declared that the “Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan is no longer a republican party [a party with presence in most of the country’s 58 districts].”⁴ The ministry called on the party to cease its activities.
- Tajikistan has been prone to sporadic outbreaks of violence emerging from struggles between elites within the state itself, and there was another such outbreak in 2015. After losing his job, former deputy defense minister Abdulhalim Nazarzoda and his supporters attacked police checkpoints near Dushanbe on September 4. Following the initial attacks, he fled with a few dozen supporters to the mountainous Romit Gorge, 30 miles northeast of Dushanbe. After a lengthy counterinsurgency operation, law enforcement officers killed Nazarzoda on the afternoon of 16 September.⁵
- After the end of the operation, the Ministry of Interior accused the IRPT of plotting the attacks. Rahmon told reporters that the attackers “pursued the same goals as the Islamic State.”⁶ This fits with the government’s discourse on the IRPT. Since the first reports of Tajik citizens fighting in Syria emerged in late 2013, the government has tried to link the IRPT to the Islamic State. Just days before the attacks in Dushanbe, local officials accused the IRPT of hoisting an Islamic State flag in Nurek.⁷ On September 17, the IRPT was classified as a terrorist organization, and approximately 200 of its members were arrested.⁸ Party leader Muhiddin Kabiri, who had left the country in April, remains in exile. In a statement on October 8, the US Mission to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) criticized the government crackdown, stating that there is “no credible evidence that the IRPT as an organization was involved with the attacks in Dushanbe.”⁹
- The Tajik authorities remain concerned about threats to regime security. It portrays both secular and religious opposition movements as threats to national security, and uses this as an excuse to repress them. Taking aim at the political opposition, in June President Rahmon warned people to beware of groups “who sow discord in our society and dragged us into civil war in the 1990s.”¹⁰ As the opposition has relocated to diaspora communities in Russia and Turkey, the Tajik authorities have increasingly used extraterritorial measures to pursue them. In January 2015, Maksud Ibragimov, leader of Youth for the Revival of Tajikistan, was rendered to Tajikistan from Moscow and sentenced to 26 years in prison.¹¹ Long-time critic of the government and leader of the online movement Group 24 Umarali Quvvatov was assassinated in Istanbul on March 6.¹² The political opposition has blamed the government for the killing.¹³ The Tajik authorities have issued arrest warrants for other members of Group 24, most of whom are already in exile, and are attempting to have them extradited. Following the slowdown in the Russian economy at the end of 2014, Tajikistan’s migration-

dependent economy struggled in 2015. In 2014, remittances sent back from the more than one million Tajiks working abroad were equivalent to half of Tajikistan’s GDP.¹⁴ This figure declined sharply in 2015. In dollar terms, remittances to Tajikistan declined 32 percent in the first half of 2015 compared to the previous year.¹⁵

Electoral Process

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
6.50	6.50	6.50	6.50	6.50	6.50	6.50	6.75	6.75	6.75

- Although the 1994 Constitution and 1999 Law on Elections provide the basis for a multi-party system, Tajikistan’s elections have been marred by corruption and intimidation, and the March 2015 parliamentary election was no different. Eight parties battled for seats in Tajikistan’s parliament, the Assembly of Representatives (*Majlis Namoyandagon*). Like in the previous election in 2010, the PDP won by a landslide, securing 51 seats in the 63-seat body.¹⁶ All but two of the seats in the assembly are now controlled by parties loyal to the government. The country’s leading opposition party, the IRPT, lost its two seats in parliament.
- The regime’s propaganda machine worked tirelessly in the run-up to the election to ensure a win for PDP. Election monitors from the OSCE said the vote “took place in a restricted political space and failed to provide a level playing field for candidates.”¹⁷ Authorities restricted opposition parties’ access to media. State-run television stations refused to show three IRPT campaign videos because they were not made in an officially licensed studio.¹⁸ Instead, the state-controlled media focused “overwhelmingly on state authorities” according to the OSCE.¹⁹
- Authorities also orchestrated a campaign to discredit the opposition in general and the IRPT in particular. Videos accusing IRPT members of sexual impropriety and involvement in corrupt practices circulated in the state media throughout 2014 and before the March 2015 vote.²⁰ In a statement on 16 February, the National Association of Independent Mass Media in Tajikistan (NANSMIT) criticized some “centers of decision-making” for “using the media and social networks to discredit opponents.”²¹ The government also used the state-sanctioned Islamic clergy to target the IRPT. Two days before the poll, imams read a Friday sermon text linking the IRPT to violence and calling on voters to support the PDP.²²
- While the government worked to discredit the opposition, it also used arrests and intimidation to restrict the number of opposition politicians who could stand as candidates. A number of candidates were detained by the police. Firdavs Sohbnazarov, chair of the Social-Democratic Party (SDP) in the southern Khuroson District, was arrested February 3 on embezzlement charges. Sohbnazarov said that the accusations were politically motivated and aimed at preventing him from participating in the elections.²³ On February 10, police arrested Jamoliddin Mahmudov, the IRPT’s only member on the electoral committee. A court quickly sentenced him to two months in jail for illegally giving two guns to a friend in 1996.²⁴
- The OSCE said the vote itself had “significant shortcomings, including multiple voting and ballot box stuffing,” repeating their conclusions in the 2010 parliamentary and 2013 presidential elections.²⁵ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reported cases of individuals voting for entire families and polling station staff telling voters who to vote for.²⁶ Despite over a million citizens residing in Russia, only three polling stations were established there.²⁷

Civil Society

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
5.00	5.50	5.75	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.25	6.25	6.50	6.50

- Western attempts to create a civil society within a democratic and capitalist Tajikistan emerged only in the 1990s, and civil society is still plagued by a lack of financial sustainability. Although the country has over 2,600 registered NGOs,²⁸ most are dependent on external financing, and when this runs out, their activities cease. The Tajik government has displayed a growing hostility toward international and domestic NGOs in recent years. Officials have frequently accused NGOs of plotting to destabilize the country. In April, Chairman of the State Committee on National Security (GKNB) Saimumin Yatimov stated that some countries "under the cover of nongovernmental organizations are using methods that contradict Tajik society's interests."²⁹
- In June, parliament approved a draft amendment to Tajikistan's law on public associations. The new law closely resembles Russia's 2012 "foreign agents" law, which requires government preapproval of all foreign-sourced expenditures by NGOs.³⁰ While the Ministry of Justice claimed this was intended to fight terrorism and corruption, the US government expressed concern "that Tajikistan's draft amendment could be used to impede funding of legitimate NGO activities."³¹ In November 2014, 90 NGOs from Tajikistan and other countries had signed an appeal calling on the government to drop the legislation and allow NGOs to work freely.³² Although the president has signed the law, it still requires further legislative changes to be implemented. Representatives from civil society reported that the law is inconsistently enforced, and the Ministry of Justice is yet to clearly outline precisely what information NGOs need to disclose.³³
- The Tajik government continued to use the fight against terrorism to legitimize its close management of religious practices in the country. The 2009 Law on Religion dictates that all religious organizations need to register with the Committee on Religious Affairs, and the 2011 Law on Parental Responsibility banned people under the age of 18 from praying in mosques and restricted access to foreign Islamic education. While the government says up to 500 Tajik citizens have travelled to fight in Syria and Iraq, the government's rhetoric and policy towards religion overstate this limited threat.³⁴ State-led secular policies tend to blur the distinction between piety and extremism. In September 2015, for example, a presidential advisor said that *bibi-otun*, female religious elders, constituted a threat to society.³⁵ The authorities have created a divide between "good," moderate, national Islam and "bad," extremist, foreign Islam.³⁶ Officials frequently speak out against "foreign" Islamic styles such as the hijab and beard, framing them as alien to national identity.³⁷ In March 2015, state television showed a documentary about prostitutes who wore hijabs to attract customers.³⁸ During a speech in September 2015, President Rahmon linked Islamic clothing to the Islamic State. "Women should set an example by fighting against the negative impact of alien phenomena and foreigner-worshipping," he declared.³⁹ Officials are following his example. The head of the Khatlon police, Bahrom Shrifzoda, announced that in 2015 police convinced 1,773 women to de-veil and forced almost 13,000 men to shave.⁴⁰

Independent Media

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
6.25	6.00	6.00	5.75	5.75	6.00	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25

- The government of Tajikistan continues to severely curtail freedom of information. While the Constitution, the 1996 Law on Television and Broadcasting, and the 2013 Law on Periodical Print and Other Mass Media grant freedom of expression and prohibit censorship and state interference

with the media, in reality, the state tightly regulates the independent media. In the run-up to the 2015 elections, the government heavily restricted the independent media and used the state media to discredit its opponents (see Electoral Process section).

- The government controls most printing presses, newsprint supplies, and broadcasting facilities in the country. Tajikistan’s media licensing commission routinely denies licenses to independent outlets or otherwise obstructs the licensing process. No member of an independent media outlet or civil society is currently a member of the licensing committee.⁴¹ The State Committee on Television and Radio (SCTR), headed by a presidential appointee, regulates and oversees broadcasting at the national and regional level. State-controlled television channels that praise the ruling party are the only media outlets broadcasting nationwide. Although no independent television stations operate in Tajikistan, most people have access to international, primarily Russian, channels via satellite television. Newspaper circulation is small, with state-owned newspapers having the largest circulation. Most independent agencies print under 4,000 copies per week. State-run newspapers *Minbari Halk* and *Jumhuriyat* have circulation in excess of 40,000 copies.⁴² In June 2015, a government directive stated that officials should speak to state news agency *Khovar* before giving interviews to the independent media.⁴³
- An estimated 1.4 million Tajiks use the internet on a regular basis.⁴⁴ As the internet becomes more popular among Tajiks and becomes a site for discussing political issues, the state-run Communications Service, led by Rahmon family member Beg Zuhurov, has in recent years routinely blocked websites and social networks that broadcast criticism of the authorities.
- Such blockages most often come at times of instability, or the when the government fears unrest. When the independent media criticized the government’s management of conflicts in the Rasht Valley in 2010 and Khorog in 2012 and 2014, the regime reacted by blocking websites.⁴⁵ In October 2014, opposition movement Group 24 used social media to call for protests in Dushanbe. The authorities quickly blocked access to hundreds of websites.⁴⁶ This pattern continued in 2015. After former head of the OMON paramilitary police Gulmurod Halimov announced his defection to the Islamic State in a YouTube video in May 2015, the government blocked a host of Russian and English-language sites.⁴⁷ When deputy defense minister Abduhalim Nazarzoda attacked a number of police checkpoints on September 4, the government blocked websites once more. Access was restored three weeks later.⁴⁸ OSCE media freedom representative Dunja Mijatović called this blocking of websites a “worrying trend.”⁴⁹
- Most journalists practice self-censorship. Insult or slander of senior government officials remains a civil offense. Journalists who write critical stories are likely to receive threats from the intelligence services, or to face libel charges or even arrest.⁵⁰ In September 2015, following the Dushanbe attacks that the authorities blamed on the IRPT, the police arrested two editors from the party’s newspaper *Najot* and charged them with terrorism.⁵¹ Having re-located some of their operations outside of the country, independent agencies like *Asia Plus* and *Ozodagon* are able to post stories on contentious issues like official corruption, falling education standards and religious radicalization.

Local Democratic Governance

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
5.75	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00

- Tajikistan’s local government bodies serve as an extension of, rather than a counterbalance to, centralized authority. Tajikistan is divided into four administrative provinces (*viloyat*) with limited autonomy. These provinces are further divided into 58 districts (*nohiya*) and 406 municipalities (*jamoat*), in addition to numerous towns and villages. Although Badakhshan is given autonomous status in the 1994 Constitution, in reality its autonomy has been curtailed by the central authorities.

- Elections for local councils were held at the same time as the parliamentary elections in March 2015. The ruling PDP won the vast majority of seats and dominates all levels of local government in the country. While the Communist Party holds a few seats in local councils, most non-ruling party representatives belong to “puppet” parties which are loyal to the regime.⁵² Like in the parliamentary elections, opposition parties faced harassment before the local elections, and the OSCE monitors witnessed numerous fraudulent activities on polling day itself (see Electoral Process section). Three IRPT members in the district of Rudaki were withdrawn from the campaign without their knowledge. The three allege that falsified letters were sent withdrawing their candidacies.⁵³
- In recent years, the central authorities have brought areas that enjoyed some autonomy, such as the Rasht Valley and Badakhshan, more firmly under their control. This process of state consolidation has relied on coercion and co-optation. The authorities have forcibly removed local leaders, many of whom fought with the opposition during the civil war and were incorporated into the government as part of the 1997 peace deal, and arrested many of their supporters. Individuals with greater loyalty to the central authorities have replaced them in the local government.⁵⁴ While the 2009 law on local self-governance provided for the decentralization of power to local authorities, the central authorities maintain a tight grip over the regions. The law provided a provision by which municipal councils could design their own budgets and elect jamoat leaders, but the government has failed to devise a mechanism to realize this despite millions of dollars of donor assistance.⁵⁵
- Local authorities have limited responsibilities confined to sanitation, maintaining cleanliness, and solving local disputes. The state keeps a close eye on potential sources of opposition, in particular religious practices. Local officials use a mixture of informal and formal measures to monitor citizens and enforce the country’s restrictive religious laws. Although the state does its best to mold docile secular citizens, Islam continues to play a key role in organizing social life and coping with everyday problems.⁵⁶ For young people, many of whom have experienced relative freedom of religion in Russia, religion is becoming an important code of moral behavior.⁵⁷
- Following the practice of the Soviet Union’s central government, President Rahmon appoints the governors of provinces and districts, including the long-serving mayor of Dushanbe. Many of these officials have used their positions to amass personal fortunes. Although Rahmon regularly rotates ministers in an effort to limit their power, Dushanbe mayor Mahmadsaid Ubaydullov has held his position since 1996. He is viewed by many as the second-most powerful man in the country and is rumored to control a range of businesses, including those linked to drug trafficking.⁵⁸ Ubaydullov has used this power base to hold onto his position.
- Approximately 70 percent of Tajikistan’s population lives in rural areas. Agricultural production, primarily cotton production, accounts for almost 20 percent of the country’s GDP and half of the domestic labor force.⁵⁹ Since 1997, land has slowly been decollectivized. While the state owns all arable land, 82 percent of this is now farmed by 108,035 privately owned *dekhan* (peasant) farms.⁶⁰ Despite this land reform, problems with governance and corruption persist. Many *dekhan* farms have remained only nominally private and are collective in all but name.⁶¹ The financial benefits of farming in Tajikistan largely favor the investment-monopoly intermediary firms that act as loan sharks, providing agronomic inputs to the farmers at inflated prices and reserving the right to purchase the year’s harvest at low prices.⁶²

Judicial Framework and Independence

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
5.75	6.00	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.50	6.75

- Intolerant of political pluralism, the government continues to use the court system to neutralize voices of dissent. Corruption and a lack of transparency pervade Tajikistan’s judicial system. Human rights

violations are widespread and rarely acknowledged by the regime. The president nominates the chairpersons and deputies of the Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, Supreme Economic Court, and the prosecutor general for parliamentary approval.

- Law enforcement bodies use the judicial system to eliminate both secular and religious opposition members. In the past year, the authorities have declared two leading opposition movements, Group 24 and the IRPT, “extremist” and “terrorist” organizations, respectively. This provided the legal grounds for the arrest of opposition members. Following the authorities’ unsubstantiated linking of the IRPT to the violence in September, 13 leading members of the party were detained on terrorism charges.⁶³
- Human rights lawyers have also come under pressure. Authorities have arrested six lawyers since the start of the year. Shuhrat Quadratov, who defended former minister of industry Zaid Saidov against corruption charges, was accused of bribing judges and sentenced to nine years in January 2015.⁶⁴ Saidov’s previous lawyer, Fahriddin Zokirov, abandoned the case after he was detained on fraud charges in March 2014.⁶⁵ The Ministry of Internal Affairs accused Buzurgmehr Yorov, who was defending detained IRPT members, of defrauding one client of \$45,000 in 2011.⁶⁶ Police arrested Yorov’s replacement, Nuriddin Mahkamov, and another colleague Dilbar Dodojonova in October, accusing them of fraud as well.⁶⁷ Zараfo Rahmoni, another lawyer who defended the IRPT members, was detained and beaten by police.⁶⁸ In July 2015, Fayziniso Vohidova, a criminal defendant attorney from Khujand, received text messages threatening to kill her and her family if she did not stop her work.⁶⁹ Amendments to the “Law on the bar and practice of law” that passed parliament in November have further eroded the independence of legal practitioners. Lawyers now have to pass an examination overseen by the Ministry of Justice.⁷⁰
- Tajikistan employs a confession-based investigative and policing system and law enforcement bodies often use torture to extract confessions. The Coalition against Torture has registered 35 documented cases of law enforcement using torture in 2015 alone.⁷¹ IRPT Deputy Chairman Saidumar Husayni told his lawyer that he was offered amnesty if he confessed on television. When he refused, the security services beat him.⁷² Police have also targeted those who show outward signs of being religiously conservative. In September 2015, police beat bearded student Umar Bobojonov to death while he was in custody in Vahdat.⁷³
- Numerous cases of abuse against army recruits have been reported,⁷⁴ and the military prosecutor’s office rarely prosecutes those who commit abuse. Border guards, who fall under the control of the GKNB, have also suffered mistreatment. Nonetheless in recent years, there have been a number of prosecutions for the use of torture, indicating a less tolerant attitude at least at the local level. In July 2015, officers beat border guard Abduvohid Kayumov to death with a wooden stick. The two officers who killed Kayumov received 16-year sentences.⁷⁵

Corruption

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.50

- Nepotism, cronyism, extortion, and bribe-seeking by government officials pervade all levels of Tajik society. Tajikistan ranks near the bottom of global surveys of corruption.⁷⁶ From small bribes paid to traffic police to thousands of dollars spent avoiding compulsory military service, corruption is a part of everyday life in Tajikistan. Although Tajikistan’s score on the World Bank’s Doing Business report improved by almost 3 points in 2016, it is still about 15 points below the regional average for Europe and Central Asia.⁷⁷
- A report in 2012 indicated roughly one third of Tajikistan’s GDP comes from the trafficking of heroin across the country’s 1,350 kilometer border with Afghanistan.⁷⁸ According to the State Department in 2015, “significant amounts of narcotics move through Tajikistan with the support of corrupt law

enforcement and government officials.”⁷⁹ Low public sector salaries and high rewards for trafficking create an environment conducive to smuggling and corruption.

- A small group of families close to the president dominates the domestic market and foreign trade. Rahmon’s brother-in-law Hasan Asadullozoda controls Tajikistan’s largest private bank, and owns an airline company and a firm that supplies bauxite for Talco, the country’s state-owned aluminum company. The president has appointed many of his family members to senior government posts. In September 2009, Rahmon appointed his then 30-year-old daughter Ozoda Emomali deputy minister of foreign affairs, and elevated her to first deputy minister in 2014.⁸⁰ Her husband Jamoliddin Nuraliyev was appointed first deputy finance minister in 2008 and in 2015 became deputy chairman of the National Bank.⁸¹ His elder son Rustam Emomali was appointed head of the State Agency for Financial Control and Measures against Corruption in March 2015.⁸²
- The details of high-level corruption are rarely revealed, and even when they are, those involved usually escape justice. A 2009 audit of the National Bank by Ernst and Young found that its chairman Muradali Alimardon had made \$550 million in undeclared loans to projects connected to his family.⁸³ Instead of being impeached, he was swiftly promoted to deputy prime minister. The International Monetary Fund continued to support the Tajik financial sector, and documents leaked to *The Economist* in June 2015 indicated that Alimardon took a further \$120 million in unauthorized loans from another one of Tajikistan’s biggest lenders, state-owned Agroinvestbank.⁸⁴
- Corrupt officials have used offshore accounts to siphon billions of dollars from state-owned banks and enterprises.⁸⁵ The state-controlled Talco aluminium smelter, for example, is owned by companies based in the British Virgin Islands. Instead of being re-invested into the state budget, the revenue raised by Talco was used as a slush fund for leading officials to spend on themselves. The International Monetary Fund has previously estimated that around \$3.5 billion, or more than a third of the country’s annual GDP, has been transferred to offshore accounts from Tajikistan.⁸⁶
- While corrupt officials are plundering the state, the authorities use allegations of corruption against political opponents. In June, state newspaper *Jumhuriyat* accused IRPT leader Muhiddin Kabiri of illegally buying property in 1999.⁸⁷ Kabiri has avoided prosecution only by remaining in exile. In 2013, similar charges were levelled against former industry minister Zaid Saidov. After attempting to set up a political party, Saidov was arrested and jailed for 51 years.⁸⁸

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¹ Emomali Rahmon, “Паёми Президенти Тоҷикистон Эмомалӣ Раҳмон ба Маҷлиси Олии Ҷумҳурии Тоҷикистон” [Speech of President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon in the Supreme Assembly of the Republic of Tajikistan,” 23 January 2015, <http://president.tj/node/8136>

² “Tajikistan: Leader of the nation law cements autocratic path,” EurasiaNet.org, 11 December 2015, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/76521>

³ Author interview with senior IRPT figure, 17 September 2015.

⁴ “Вазорати адлияи ҶТ: ҲНИТ дигар ҳизби умумиҷумҳуриявӣ нест” [Ministry of Justice: IRPT is no longer a republican party], *Khovar*, 28 August 2015, <http://sugd.tj/index.php/navidi-sugd/5217-adlia>

⁵ Edward Lemon, “Violence in Tajikistan emerges from within the state,” CACI Analyst, 23 September 2015, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13279-violence-in-tajikistan-emerges-from-within-the-state.html>

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