



June 30, 2014
Via post and fax

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Your Excellency:

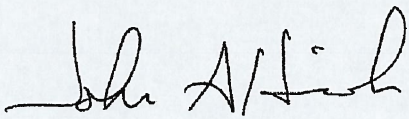
I write to you on behalf of more than 13,000 US, Canadian and international members of the American Political Science Association, a scholarly association that represents professors and students of political science. It is with grave concern that we have read reports that Alexander Sodiqov, a PhD candidate studying conflict resolution at the University of Toronto, was recently arrested and detained.

According to media reports and Scholars at Risk (SAR), on June 16, 2014, Mr. Sodiqov disappeared in Khorog, Tajikistan while doing fieldwork on conflict resolution and civil society in Central Asia. At the time of his arrest, Mr. Sodiqov was allegedly conducting an interview with civil society activist Alim Sherzamonov, an opposition leader in Tajikistan. The Tajik secret police, the GKNB, initially confirmed that they had detained Mr. Sodiqov on June 16, claiming that he was engaged in espionage on behalf of an unnamed government. Mr. Sodiqov was reportedly able to contact his family by phone on the same day, but could not state who had detained him or where he was being held. Since that time, however, SAR understands that Mr. Sodiqov's family and colleagues have not heard from him; authorities have refused to disclose his location, or to indicate whether he remains in custody. According to reports, Mr. Sodiqov has appeared on local Tajik state television twice since his arrest, each time appearing pale and confused, with his speech apparently edited in a manner designed to discredit the political opposition.

Absent any additional information that may explain these events or clarify our understandings, the facts as described suggest that Mr. Sodiqov was arrested as a result of nonviolent activity and scholarly research, conduct that is expressly protected under international human rights instruments including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Tajikistan is party. This raises not only serious concerns for the detainee's well-being, but for the ability of intellectuals generally in Tajikistan to exercise academic freedom.

We therefore respectfully urge appropriate authorities to investigate the situation and to secure his immediate release or, pending his release, to explain publicly the circumstances of Mr. Sodiqov's arrest and on-going detention, including any charges against him and the basis for such charges; to ensure that his case proceeds in a manner consistent with Tajikistan's obligations under international law, in particular internationally recognized standards of due process, fair trial, free expression and freedom of association; and to ensure his well-being in custody, including disclosure of his current location and access to counsel and family.

Sincerely,



John Aldrich
President
American Political Science Association



Steven Rathgeb Smith
Executive Director
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Cc:

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