

16th session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues

Session 4: Protection and promotion of the rights of persons belonging to minority groups towards cohesive societies

Discussion areas

- ***Positive Examples, Good Practices and Approaches – discussing legal and institutional frameworks and policies that effectively safeguard minority rights and promoting the inclusion of persons belonging to minority groups in society.***
- ***Challenges relating to the inclusion of persons belonging to minority groups - given that the scope of discussions of the Forum cannot possibly be exhaustive, under this subitem, the Forum welcomes participants to share additional information on issues of importance, and challenges faced, with regard to the inclusion of persons belonging to minority groups in cohesive societies¹***

Thank you, Madam Chair. My name is Asliddin Sherzamonov, and I am a human rights activist representing the Pamiri minority.

The Pamiris² are a resilient yet unrecognized ethnic, linguistic, and religious community residing in the Gorno-Badakshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) in Tajikistan, their ancestral home. Despite being an autonomous region, GBAO grapples with economic disparities and centralized control. The Aga Khan Development Network, the sole humanitarian entity on the ground, faces intense pressure, resulting in closures of vital projects like schools and early childhood development centers.

Since 2008, the Pamiri minority has endured repeated crackdowns, notably in 2021, leading to over 40 deaths, 100 injuries, 200-300 imprisonments, and more than 2000 seeking asylum abroad. Murders remain uninvestigated, and detainees suffer egregious mistreatment. Human rights defenders, activists, community leaders and journalists are among those persecuted, with transnational repression further silencing voices.

² <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/pamiris/>

Over 200 NGOs³, spanning human rights, gender equality, education, and economic empowerment, have been coerced to shut down. GBAO's once vibrant civil society now exists in fear, unable to report violations by authorities.

I urge the UN to take decisive action:

- Advocate for the official recognition of the Pamiris as an independent minority group with full rights and liberties.
- Task the regional OHCHR office to monitor ongoing human rights abuses in GBAO.
- Form an Independent International Commission to investigate atrocities by security forces in 2021 and 2022.
- Push for immediate and unconditional release of detained civil society leaders, protecting their freedoms.
- Support economic development in GBAO, enhancing infrastructure and market access for Pamiri goods.
- Engage Tajikistan to tackle corruption in law enforcement, ensuring fair processes and adequate remuneration.

These actions can uplift the Pamiri community and foster a more just society in Tajikistan. Let us stand together to uphold human rights and justice for all. Thank you.

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³ <https://wechange.de/project/roof-top-info/>

⁴ <https://the.akdn/en/home>