

Monday, July 21, 2014

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

On behalf of the 60,171 constituent members of some of the largest and most significant academic societies in the world, 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, July 21, 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:

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Board of Directors, American Anthropological Association
Board of Directors, American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages
Board of Directors, American Comparative Literature Association
Board of Directors, Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies
Board of Directors, Association for the Study of Nationalities
Board of Directors, British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies
Board of Directors, British Association for the Study of Religions
Board of Directors, British International Studies Association
Board of Directors, British Sociological Association
Board of Directors, Central Eurasian Studies Society
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Board of Directors, Europeans Association of Social Anthropologists
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