

## ORAL INTERVENTION

### 2015 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting Working Session 8 Rule of Law: Prevention of torture (25 September 2015)

#### Torture and ill-treatment rife in the armed forces of Tajikistan

The NGO coalitions against torture in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and the Civic Solidarity Platform members Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Poland), International Partnership for Human Rights (Belgium) and Norwegian Helsinki Committee are alarmed about ongoing torture in the armed forces in Tajikistan and the serious outcome in several of these cases.

Six soldiers died since the beginning of 2014. Five of them served in the Border Guards under the authority of the State Committee on National Security and one served in the army's Ground Forces.

The NGO Coalition against Torture in Tajikistan recorded a total of 12 cases of torture and other ill-treatment in the armed forces since January 2014. These 12 cases constitute the tip of the iceberg as victims and families often refrain from complaining for fear of reprisals and to avoid being labeled as "traitors" by their peers and commanding officers.

One of the victims is **Abduvakhob Kayumov**, whom two fellow-soldiers beat and hit so severely with a wooden stick that he died on the way to the hospital in July 2015.

**Shakhbol Mirzoev**, a soldier serving in the Border Guards, was injured so severely by military and medical personnel at a Border Guards unit in March 2014 that he was left seriously disabled. Now, he is able to sit in a wheel chair a maximum of two hours per day. The rest of the time he has to lie down.

We are concerned that not all investigations conducted by the Military Prosecutor's Office have been conducted effectively. Commanding officers have been brought to justice in only three of the above mentioned cases, although there was compelling evidence to suggest that senior officers carried responsibility for not preventing, abetting or condoning abuse of soldiers in further cases.

We are also concerned that in 2014 at least three perpetrators of torture in the army benefitted from amnesties and had their sentences reduced.

Our key recommendations to the authorities of Tajikistan are to:

- Publish comprehensive statistics on complaints, investigations, prosecutions and convictions relating to torture and ill-treatment in the army.
- To ensure that perpetrators are excluded from amnesties.
- To ensure prompt, thorough and impartial investigations into all allegations of torture and ill-treatment in the army and to establish the liability of direct perpetrators and those in the chain of command and bring to justice those responsible.

Thank you for your attention.