
RIGHTS PROTECTION FUND FOR TAJIK JOURNALISTS

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The purpose of the Fund of Memory and Protection of rights of journalists of Tajikistan is to immortalize the names of journalists who perished during the civil war, and the protection of rights of journalists and freedom of speech in the country.

The Fund was created in 1997 under the aegis of the newspaper of the Union of Tajik Journalists *Posukh* ("Answer"). That very year the bloody civil war ended, in which at least 50 thousand people were killed. The Fund's employees collected information on the journalists killed during the civil war, and the Fund's first large action was the publication in *Posukh* of 43 photos of the perished colleagues. However, a year later, in 1998, the newspaper *Posukh* ceased to be published; the Fund became an independent, public, non-governmental, non-commercial organization, and was registered with the Ministry of Justice of the Republic.

PAYING A TRIBUTE OF MEMORY

The Fund of memory and protection of rights of journalists of Tajikistan is an unique organization in the Republic and has data on all the perished journalists of the country. Due to the Fund, the names of the perished journalists of Tajikistan were immortalized in Washington by the International Committee for Rights of Journalists. "In my opinion, the Fund is engaged in useful activity; we should all support it in every possible way", underlined Mr. Tilloe Nekkadam, Editor of information, sports and reception of citizens department of the newspaper *Sadoee mardum*. The Fund maintains constant communication with members of the families of the dead colleagues, and arranges various memorial actions.. Thus, together with the Olimpuri International Fund, a commemoration meeting devoted to the 55th anniversary of the known Tajik journalist, Mukhiddin Olimpuri, and a presentation of a new book about the personality and activity of the journalist were held. "It is due to the Fund's initiative that a day to my father's memory was held, in which representatives of embassies and diplomatic circles accredited in our Republic took part", said Mrs. Djamila Khuseinova, a daughter of the known Tajik journalist Maksud Khusein. "We are very grateful to the Fund for the fact that it respects and protects the memory of my father and his co-workers." The OSCE assisted the Fund in the organization of this action.

PROTECTION OF JOURNALISTS

An important part of the Fund's activity is the protection of rights of journalists. "By paying a tribute to the memory of our co-workers, we also aspire to make public all facts concerning infringement of journalists' rights, thereby warning others against arbitrariness of power structures." The Fund's Chairman, Mukhtor Bokizada, informed: "It was due to the intervention of the Fund that many journalists were saved from prosecution in the post-war period." Numerous appeals of the Fund in 1998 to various levels of jurisdiction were 'crowned'; consequently, Mr. Akhliddin Issoev, a press photographer of the newspaper *Djumkhuriyat*, charged of crime, was unconditionally discharged. In 1999, a correspondent of the weekly *Avicenna*, Mr. Sh. Kadyrov, being bullied by unknown persons,

had applied to the Fund for help. Due to the Fund's contacts with law-enforcement bodies and its interposition, the actions were ceased. The Fund fought for the rights of journalist Saifiddin Dostiev, who had become under pressure of the Chairman of the Vosei district of the Khatlon region, Mr. K. Mirzoaliev, for critical publication.

THE FUND FACILITATES FREEDOM OF SPEECH

"The Fund's activity intend to strengthen of the freedom of press in Tajikistan, and provide for conditions of unobstructed and safe work for the journalists", Mr. M. Bokizada believes. "We work in the name of the development of real journalism in the country." In the framework of its mission, the Fund used to hold seminars, meetings and take other actions. In the previous year, the Fund organized a cycle of round-tables on the subject of "Freedom of mass media and freedom of thought" in Kurgan-tyube, Kulyab, Khudjant, and Khorog.