

Criminal Cases up to 10 years in prison for “likes” and “shares” in Tajikistan

Dear ladies and Gentlemen!

Representatives of the Tajik government speak here about freedom of expression loudly or when you meet the Tajik diplomats, they say a lot of improvements in the field of freedom of expression. But the reality is opposite and something totally else.

Tajikistan is a country, where the activists and ordinary people are afraid of pushing the button of “like” and “share”, when they use social networks, such as Facebook and Odnoklassniki, because they know well what will be the consequences of pushing “like” and “share”.¹ Is this called as freedom of expression in the twenty first century?

In June 2018, the parliament of Tajikistan changed the article 179 of the criminal code that putting “likes” and “shares” on the social networks, as such Facebook and Odnoklassniki is considered as crimes leading to imprisonment to 10 years in the prison.

Criminal Cases for “like”-s and “share”-s in Tajikistan

In May 2018, Alijon Sharipov was sentenced to 9,5 years in prison for watching, liking, and sharing videos of a banned Islamic Party’s gatherings abroad. He just pushed the buttons of “like”-s and “share”-s on the videos of speeches of Muhiddin Kabiri, chairman of the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan and head of the National Alliance of Tajikistan (NAT).² Almost 10 years in prison for likes and shares. How do the Tajik representatives and diplomats explain this?

Two months ago, in July 2019, another citizen, Ibrohim Qosimov from Panjakent district, was sentenced to 9.5 years in prison for the same reason: pushing “likes” and “shares” on the posts belong to opposition figures.³

Recommendation

I ask the Tajik representatives at this conference to explain how putting a like or share is considered as a crime?

I also urge the OSCE to demand the government of Tajikistan to release Alijon Sharipov, Ibrohim Qosimov and all those who were sentenced for putting “likes” and “shares” on the social networks.

Thanks for attention!

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¹ Sutori, *Criminal cases for likes and shares in Central Asian states*, <https://www.sutori.com/story/criminal-cases-for-likes-and-shares-in-central-asian-states--cBWLQqDS6ahNRwCCfaGRYXDf>

² RadioFreeEurope / Radioliberty, *Tajik Man Sentenced To Nearly 10 Years Over Sharing IRPT Videos* (May 11, 2018) <https://www.rferl.org/a/tajik-man-sentenced-to-nearly-10-years-over-sharing-irpt-videos/29221164.html>

³ Akhbor, *The Case of A Panjakent Resident on Cooperation with the Opposition (in Tajik)*, (July 13, 2019) <https://akhbor.com/xx-p9651-155.htm>