

Tajikistan Country Statement

Key Messages

- there is little space for freedom of religious expression
- religious education is poor, allowing extremism to flourish

Key Recommendations

- incorporate studies of world civilizations and international religions into school curricula

Tajikistan is a Central Asian republic, but for 75 years, it was part of the Soviet Union. It is no secret that during those years, people did not have freedom of religion. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Tajikistan embarked on a bitter Civil War from 1992-1997, which extracted a devastating toll on the population. Though the war ended in 1997 our economy has lagged as a result for more than 20 years.

In view of the fact that for much of our history we have not had the space for religious expression and we have not had many educated religious leaders, it is unsurprising that fake religious clerics emerged who speak about Islam but in fact are promoting extremism. Religious extremists and Islamic radicals attract young boys and men to their mosques and gatherings and preach their ideology. They appeal not only to young boys and men throughout Tajikistan, but also to those Tajiks living and working as labor migrants throughout the Russian Federation. The migrant workers then return home even more radicalized, and spread their ideas further to the people living in their communities. Consequently radicalism affects our women and children, too.

Although we do not have a strong and broad-based women's movement in Tajikistan, several NGOs and other organizations fight against emerging extremism and militarism. NGOs such as the League of Women-Lawyers of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Bureau of Human Rights work with men and women who have been released from detention centers, and provide them with psychological and legal assistance to reintegrate them into Tajik society. We also help them seek jobs.

Our key message to the government of the Republic of Tajikistan is to incorporate studies of world civilizations and international religions within our school curricula. From the international community, we ask you not to neglect Tajikistan in tackling these problems and help us with your expertise and knowledge in educating a generation who will be tolerant and respectful toward all the religions of the world. We came to this conference organized by ICAN for the first time and learned that there are so many countries that have fought against extremism and militarism for many decades; we can learn from them. We kindly request these countries share their knowledge and experience with countries such as Tajikistan where extremism and militarism are new issues for our state and society. For example, we learned that some of Pakistan's private schools have incorporated the basics of world civilizations and world religions into their curricula, helping young children to become more tolerant. We believe this practice would be very helpful in Tajikistan as well. We need to educate our people, starting with our families, our schools, and our communities.

We would like to thank the representatives of ICAN for including Tajikistan in such a conference and for giving us this opportunity to convey our key message.

Please direct questions and comments to info@icanpeacework.org.