



Genocide Watch  
The Alliance Against Genocide

## Country Report: Republic of Tajikistan

Genocide Watch is issuing a **Genocide Watch** for Tajikistan. Ethnic Pamirs in the autonomous oblast of Gorno-Badakhshan are facing increased surveillance, persecution, and detention at the hands of the Tajik government.

The [Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast \(GBAO\)](#) comprises the entire eastern portion of Tajikistan. While GBAO comprises 45% of Tajik territory it only holds 3% of the population. Most of the GBAO population are Pamirs, an ethnic group that is linguistically and culturally distinct from the rest of the Tajik population. Most of the population of Tajikistan are ethnic Tajiks, speak Tajik (a variety of Persian) and practice Sunni Islam. The Pamirs speak a language closer to Pashto and Balochi and adhere to the Nizari sect of Shia Islam, which looks to the Aga Khan as its spiritual leader.

Tajikistan is currently led by [Emomali Rahmon](#), who has been President since the independence of Tajikistan from the Soviet Union in 1994. Rahmon has ruled Tajikistan with an iron grip by suppressing opposition, setting up a cult of personality, and creating a corrupt bureaucracy staffed by his family and sycophants.

Rahmon came to power following the [Tajik Civil War \(1992-1997\)](#) which pitted the former Tajik Communist party against the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), which was an alliance of liberal reformers and Islamist forces. The former Communists prevailed. The civil war killed upwards of 150,000 people and displaced over 1.5 million. The UTO had strong support among the Pamirs in GBAO, which is a contributing factor to their ongoing persecution in the region.

On May 21, 2022, Tajik police killed four people in the city of [Khorugh](#), the administrative center for Gorno-Badakhshan. Following the killings, civilian protests broke out and the police headquarters in Khorugh was burned down. Tajik security forces began a [brutal crackdown](#) in the region and killed at least a dozen protestors. The Tajik government is also accused of abducting Pamir activists in Moscow and flying them back for detention in Tajikistan. Tajikistan typically goes unmentioned in global news reporting. While events in GBAO have not reached the stage of civil war, the situation remains precarious.

Tajikistan frequently clashes with neighboring Kyrgyzstan over the fertile Fergana Valley region. In one week of fighting in September of 2022, over [100 casualties](#) (including four children) and 137,000 displaced people were recorded.

Exacerbating the unrest, the Tajik economy is in serious jeopardy due to the coronavirus and [the war in Ukraine](#). Over 25% of the Tajik economy is supported by [remittances](#) from migrant workers in Russia, and the recent collapse of the Russian economy has created severe vulnerability for Tajikistan. The ongoing crisis in neighboring Afghanistan and succession issues concerning the eventual end of Rahmon's dictatorship also pose potential risks to both the Pamir minorities and Tajik dissidents.

Genocide Watch considers Tajikistan to be at **Stage 6: Polarization** and **Stage 8: Persecution**.

### Genocide Watch recommends:

- The European Union, the United States, and NATO should be more attentive to the persecution of Pamirs in Tajikistan and the potential for civil war.
- The EU and US should consider providing relief to Central Asian economies when issuing new sanctions against the Russian Federation.
- The United Nations should consider reestablishing the [United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan \(UNMOT\)](#) which was discontinued in 1997.