

To: Norwegian Helsinki Committee, United Nations, OSCE, European Union, ICRC, Embassies and Diplomatic Missions, International Organisations

From: citizens of Tajikistan from around the world

Date: July 25, 2012

RE: A call by all the peace-minded citizens of Tajikistan to the International Community

We are deeply concerned with the ongoing armed conflict in Khorog, GBAO. Since the early morning of 24 July 2012 Tajik security and military forces has started an operation involving reportedly over 3,000 personnel with automatic arms, armed personnel carrying vehicles and helicopters in the densely populated areas of the town, with no prior notice to or evacuation of the population. All lines of communication have been terminated – reportedly by an order of the State Committee for National Security to all telecommunication providers in the country –, and there is no possibility to communicate with the residents of Khorog. All roads to Khorog are also reportedly closed. So, more than 30,000 residents of the Khorog area, including women, children and elderly, are trapped in this conflict. Even if there are militants in the area, this is not an excuse to put the lives of innocent people in danger. Thus, we refer to the principle of proportionality (article 51(5)(b) IAP) a basic principle that states that even if there is a clear military target it is not possible to attack it if the harm to civilians or civilian property is excessive to the expected military advantage.

While official reports by the press-services of the Interior Ministry and the State Committee for National Security released in the second half of Tuesday, 24 July 2012, mentioned 12 security and military personnel as killed and over 20 as wounded, 30 militants as captured, and no casualties among the population, reports by independent media already yesterday mentioned over 200 casualties. Apart from the human dimension element of the situation, it poses a risk of escalation and deterioration of the situation in the Central Asian region. There are reports of armed groups gathering on the Afghan side of the border in the area of Khorog, so there is a high potential for a cross-border conflict.

We plea for help from the international community. We believe that the situation calls for immediate intervention by the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, European Union, governments of democratic states from West and East, whose missions are present in Tajikistan but so far have been silent.

We believe that the actions by the Tajik authorities represent violations of the commitments and obligations of the Republic of Tajikistan under the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other UN human rights instruments, the OSCE Human Dimension Commitments and the Fourth Geneva Convention, and hence, are subject to immediate review by the UN Security Council and the OSCE Permanent Council.

We plea for support and call for pressure on the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan to announce a permanent and complete cease-fire and restore all communication channels.