

In the centers of Tursunzoda, Shaartuz, Dusti and Nosiri Khusrav districts, the representatives of public organizations and local governments, social workers, staff of Ministry of Education, religious leaders discussed the issues of promoting interreligious tolerance and countering violent extremism with experts.

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The meetings were aimed at raising awareness of the necessity to promote interfaith dialogue and how religious tolerance, understanding of other religions and knowledge of religious diversity can help preventing conflicts and violent extremism.

254 persons - representatives of public organizations and local governments, social workers, staff of the Ministry of Education, religious leaders - took part in four dialogue meetings in Tursunzoda, Shaartuz, Dusti and Nosiri Khusrav districts.

During the meetings, the following experts delivered speech: Bogigul Islomova, the chief specialist of the Committee on Women and Family Affairs under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, Rustam Azizi, Deputy Director of the Center for Islamic Studies under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Saidahmad Kalandarov, religious scholar, Lola Olimova, media expert and lawyers Abdulmajid Rizoiev and Gulguna Shozodaeva.



Dialogue meeting in Tursunzoda. Photo: cabar.asia

Despite the work of state bodies, nongovernmental and international organizations in the area of radicalization prevention, the level of interfaith tolerance in monoreligious districts of Tajikistan still needs to be raised further. At the same time, the awareness of the legislation on freedom of religion should be improved as well.

To achieve these goals, the speakers and experts participating in the dialogue meetings held interactive sessions where the districts' residents could ask their questions and receive competent answers. The experts were able to establish a dialogue using interactive tools.



Participants of the meeting watched a fragment from a documentary film about the problems linked with radicalization in Tajik society. Photo: cabar.asia



Lola Olimova. Photo: cabar.asia

Thus, at the beginning of the dialogue meeting in the Nosiri Khusrav district, media expert Lola Olimova demonstrated the participants a fragment from a documentary film about the problems linked with radicalization in Tajik society and invited the participants to share their opinions about the stories of ordinary people whose relatives were recruited into the radical terrorist organizations banned in Tajikistan.

“This event was very effective in terms of the fact that here [...] we saw the population’s response to the radicalization problem.

*Participants actively discussed the issue, offered their ideas on what to do, so that situations when people become radicalized and participate in “someone else’s wars” do not recur”, said **Lola Olimova**, media expert, moderator of the dialogue meeting.*

IWPR Tajikistan Conducted Dialogue Meetings on Religion in Four District Centers of Tajikistan

Rustam Azizi, Deputy Director of the Center for Islamic Studies under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, comprehensively told about how radicalization may happen online. In addition, this representative of the Center for Islamic Studies explained how the online materials are evaluated and what is considered as violent extremism propaganda.



Rustam Azizi. Photo: cabar.asia

Religious scholar Saidahmad Kalandarov, as one of the solutions to the radicalization problem, offered the participants to raise their awareness about other religions and religious diversity in Tajikistan, to recognize the necessity and the value of tolerance in the society. The meetings participants asked the expert a number of questions relating to the historical religious diversity in Tajikistan and learned a lot.



Dialogue meeting in Shaartuz district. Photo: cabar.asia

Saidahmad Kalandarov, religious scholar: *“The trainings were very effective. I believe*

that even more people should attend such events, especially imam-khatibs, representatives of local authorities and education sector. We noticed during the dialogue meeting in Nosiri Khusrav district that people understood their imperfections and admitted the lack of interfaith tolerance. During the dialogue meetings, participants improved their awareness about tolerance and how tolerance contributes to reducing radicalization.”



Saidahmad Kalandarov. Photo: cabar.asia

In the dialogue meetings in Tursunzoda, Shaartuz and Dusti districts, lawyers participated and comprehensively explained to the participants the aspects of the current legislation of the Republic of Tajikistan in the sphere of regulation of religious activity. Lawyers Abdulmajid Rizoiev and Gulguna Shozodaeva presented the legal instruments for the religious freedom protection. They drew attention to the fact that every citizen has a right to choose religion, and respect for such a choice is an important tool in the fight against radicalization.



Dialogue meeting in Dusti district. Photo: cabar.asia

During each meeting, the Q&A session took place. The participants of the discussions asked many questions, argued with experts, wondered what, in the experts' opinion, they could do to prevent violent extremism and promote interfaith tolerance. Participants agreed that work in these areas often depends on them, the informal leaders of their communities.

Inobat Nabizoda, an employee of the Committee for Women and Family Affairs department in Nosiri Khusrav district: *"We were very glad that IWPR Tajikistan and the Committee for Women and Family Affairs organized such an informative meeting in our district! The meeting participants discovered a lot for themselves. I am sure that they will spread their knowledge. We welcome this kind of activities and we will be happy to participate in the future events!"*



Dialogue meeting in Nosiri Khusrav district. Photo: cabar.asia

At the meetings, participants received brochures containing extracts from laws, information about religious diversity in Tajikistan, interfaith dialogue, why and how should it be promoted.

IWPR will hold similar dialogue meetings in other districts of the Khatlon region, as well as in the districts of the Sughd and GBAO regions, and in Districts of Republican Subordination of the Republic of Tajikistan.





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