

On December 12-13, IWPR Tajikistan together with the Committee of Religion, Regulation of Traditions, Celebrations and Ceremonies under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and The Public Fund Civil Internet Policy Initiative (CIPI) Tajikistan held the Third Regional Forum on Preventing Violent Extremism in Digital Dimensions.



*Dmitry Zavalov, IWPR Program Coordinator, talks about actions aimed at raising public awareness of digital security. Photo: CABAR.asia*

Over 100 representatives of various state, international and public organizations, experts and specialists from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, as well as experts from Canada, Russia, Austria and several other countries participated in it.

Abakhon Sultonazarov, IWPR Central Asia Regional Director, in his opening speech said that the Representative Office of the Institute for War and Peace Reporting in Central Asia for five years had been focusing and actively addressing the problems of countering violent extremism in Tajikistan and three other Central Asian countries.



Abakhon Sultonazarov. Photo: CABAR.asia

“Together with our partners, we conduct trainings for religious leaders on the prevention of violent extremism in social networks. We train not just them, but journalists, youth, and civil society activists as well. We conduct our training programs for young people on critical thinking, fake news resistance, fact checking in the most remote regions of four Central Asian countries, as well as in central universities of these countries. We also set ourselves ambitious goals: to develop analytical centers in our countries in order to promote peace, stability and prosperity of the region,” he said.

Forum participants discussed the latest tendencies of using online channels in Central Asia by violent extremists and terrorists to promote their programs. Existing legal challenges and issues of responses coordination at the national and regional levels were discussed. Issues related to the relevant technical challenges, gaps and needs in effective strategic countermeasures and online violent extremism groups’ monitoring were also discussed.



*Forum participants discussed measures to counter the spread of violent extremism on the Internet. Photo: CABAR.asia*

The Chief Prosecutor of the Department for Combating Extremism, Terrorism and the Oversight of the Implementation of Laws in the Field of National Security of the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Tajikistan spoke about the need to counter Internet usage for extremist and terrorist purposes. The representative of OSCE Secretariat in Austria spoke about new effective methods for countering and preventing Internet usage by terrorists. An expert from Canada, Juliet McMurren, SecDev Group, presented research on the digital tools' usage by violent extremists in Central Asia.



Photo: CABAR.asia

During the next session, participants examined legal and regulatory challenges of a coordinated response to violent extremism in the region, specific difficulties at the national and regional levels, as well as options for coordination within the framework of bilateral cooperation and regional organizations such as the UN, OSCE, CIS ATC, SCO, CSTO and others.

Forum participants discussed methods of countering the spread of violent extremism on the Internet and national gaps and needs in raising cybersecurity awareness and digital literacy of the population, as well as opportunity to cooperate with social network platform operators at the regional and global levels.

New action plans and activities at the national and regional levels to address the causes of violent extremism in the region were discussed during one of the sessions. IWPR Program Coordinator Dmitry Zavialov spoke about IWPR's work in local communities and actions aimed at raising awareness of public, in particular, youth, religious and community leaders about digital security.

Forum participants drew attention to the importance of partnerships between government institutions, the media and NGOs in creating and spreading positive narratives online to counter ideas and views created and distributed by banned extremist groups offline and online among local communities in the Central Asian region.



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