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PRESS RELEASE

OSCE Office in Tajikistan co-organizes international seminar on independent detention monitoring

DUSHANBE, 27 May 2009 - Participants at a seminar supported by the OSCE Office in Tajikistan ending today discussed the benefits of independent monitoring of prisons and shared best practices.

The Office organized the seminar, titled "Independent Detention Monitoring in Closed Institutions: Tajikistan and Experiences of Other States", together with the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Geneva-based Association for the Prevention of Torture, and the Dushanbe-based Bureau of Human Rights and Rule of Law. Funding for the event came from the OSCE, the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the Open Society Institute.

The event brought together more than 60 participants from Tajikistan, including representatives from the government, civil society, international organizations and the media. Experts from Slovenia, Georgia, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan - countries where, unlike Tajikistan, the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT) has been ratified - shared their experiences of creating the National Prevention Mechanism that is required under the Protocol.

"Gatherings such as this are critical to promote human rights' best-practices as related to monitoring of detention facilities," said Payam Foroughi, Human Dimension Officer of the Office in Tajikistan.

Aside from OPCAT, also discussed was Tajikistan's institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman, approved by the Government in 2008. Participants welcomed the Tajik President's appointment of Tajikistan's first Human Rights Ombudsman, which coincided with the second day of the seminar.

Other issues discussed included the International Committee of the Red Cross' access to Tajikistan's prisons and places of detention, the possibilities for a visit to Tajikistan by the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture and the ongoing country's moratorium on the death penalty.

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