

Ukraine Frees Tajik Ex-Premier

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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KIEV — Ukraine has released Tajikistan's former prime minister from detention and will not extradite him to his home country, where he has been accused of plotting an assassination and a coup, officials said Thursday.

Ukrainian authorities held Abdulmalik Abdullojonov when he flew into Kiev on Feb. 5, saying he was wanted in Tajikistan for "very serious crimes."

The United Nations last month urged Ukraine not to send Abdullojonov back home, on the grounds that the United States had already granted him refugee status.

"Ukraine will not extradite [Abdullojonov]," a spokeswoman for the prosecutor general's office said, without going into further details.

Abdullojonov, prime minister from 1992-93 soon after the Central Asian state's independence from the Soviet Union, was released on Thursday, said a spokesman for the law firm that represented him.

Ukraine is under pressure to improve its human rights record from the European Union which has made it a condition of signing key agreements on political association and free trade this year.

Abdullojonov has long denied accusations by Tajik officials that he was he was involved in an attempt on the life of his political rival Imomali Rakhmon in 1997.

Abdullojonov moved to the United States in 1998 and was living there up to his trip to Ukraine this year.

Predominantly Muslim Tajikistan, which lies on a major transit route for Afghan drugs to Europe and Russia, remains volatile after a 1992-97 civil war in which Rakhmon's Moscow-backed secular government clashed with Islamist guerrillas.

Rights groups have accused Rakhmon of cracking down on dissent and blocking websites before a November election that could extend his two-decade rule.

Ukraine drew criticism from rights groups last year when a Russian opposition activist disappeared in Kiev, where he had sought asylum, and ended up in a Moscow detention center where he faced criminal charges.

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