
TAJKISTAN: OFFICIALS BACKTRACK ON SLAVIC NAME BAN

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Tajikistan has climbed down on recent proposals to abolish Slavic-sounding surnames following outraged reactions from members of parliament in Russias State Duma.

Radio Free Europe/Radio Libertys Tajik service, Ozodi, on April 29 cited the deputy head of the Tajikistans civil registration service, Jaloliddin Rahimov, as saying that a new law would spell an end to surnames ending in -ov, and even the -ovna and -ovich suffix for patronymics. The provision, which seems to have been specifically targeted at phasing out Slavic-style family names, is part of plans to inculcate greater national pride.

President Emomali Rahmon led the way in 2007 by ditching the old form of his surname, Rahmonov.

Rahimov, whose own surname is notably furnished with the -ov suffix, said that officials would have clarifying conversations with people wanting to keep their names unchanged.

If the situation doesnt change, then within 10 years our children will be split into two groups □ one will be proud of their Tajik names, and the others will have foreign names, said Rahimov.

As a rule, Tajik surnames end with the suffixes -i, -zod, -zoda, -on, -yon, -ien, -yor, -niyo or -far.

The surname rule fits into a broader pattern of fiddling while Rome burns as authorities busy themselves indulging in petty bans as the country descends into economic ruin.

In January, the lower house of parliament voted to make it illegal to give babies non-Tajik names or to seal nuptials without a medical certificate. The language and terminology committee at the Academy of Sciences drew up a list of 4,000 suitable names to make sure wayward parents do not try to endow their children with names like Sang (Stone), Safol (Ceramic), Zog (Crow) and Gurg (Wolf).

The surname rule elicited a fiery response from MPs in Russia. Ilya Drozdov, a member of the virulently nationalist-chauvinist LDPR, suggested harsh retaliations.

All it would take is a phone call to an official – it wouldn't even have to be a particularly important one – with a nod and wink to say, guys, tomorrow we will close the border and bring in a visa regime. After that I think they will be happy to take Ivanov and Petrov as surnames and they will recall how they spoke Russian back in Soviet times, Drozdov said.

That sort of talk seems to have persuaded Rahimov to swiftly reconsider the surname diktat, which he told Asia-Plus news website should only be considered a recommendation not an obligation.

Many Tajiks prefer to keep their Slavic surnames for the simple reason that it helps them adapt more smoothly to life in Russia, where hundreds of thousands go for work.

While back-pedaling, Rahimov did manage to state his case for Tajikistan's sovereignty, however.

Tajikistan is an independent state and questions regarding the names of its citizens are an internal matter for the state. Nobody has the right to interfere. Why should language, culture or even names in one state be controlled by and agreed upon with another state? he said.

Kaynak/Source: