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Local and international media turn to IWPR for expert opinion on leading journalist's killing following two in-depth reports on the crime.

IWPR's coverage of the murder of Alisher Saipov, a leading Kyrgyz journalist and longtime IWPR contributor, provided important context and insight for local and international media.

Saipov was killed in Osh, Kyrgyzstan on October 24, 2007, by an unknown gunman. The Kyrgyz authorities are still investigating the case.

IWPR published two in-depth stories on the killing, one looking at the implications for freedom of speech and the other suggesting that the Kyrgyz authorities may fail to vigorously investigate the crime.

The article "Journalist's Murder Sets Back Free Speech in Central Asia" stated that Saipov's killing may deter others from reporting on sensitive political topics. The idea for this angle came after a local round table discussion in Bishkek, where the fallout from the murder was discussed by Kyrgyz journalists and media activists.

The other story, "Politics May Cloud Truth in Kyrgyz Murder Inquiry", analysed concerns that a thorough investigation of the possible involvement of Uzbekistan in Saipov's death will prove politically impossible because Bishkek is worried about antagonising Tashkent.

Following publication of the articles, IWPR provided expert comment to Central Asian media organisations on the implication of the killing for the regional press and gave interviews to local and international news outlets, including Radio Netherlands, on the likely outcome of the official investigation into the crime.

The two stories were republished by local websites, including Tazar, Made.in.kg, and newspapers, such as Litsa, Obshestvenny Reyting, Novy Kyrgyzstan.

The article examining the investigation into Saipov's death elicited a number of responses from Kyrgyz officials, academics and NGO representatives.

Bakyt Abdyllaev, an adviser in the prime minister's office, said, "I didn't know the late journalist personally, but after reading this report, many things became clearer to me, and I learned what might have led to his death.

"In contrast to other media, which linked the journalist to extremist organisations or called it a political murder without listing any objective evidence, this report has accurate information and opinions from different sides."

Esen Usabaliev, deputy director of Institute for Strategic Analysis and Prognosis, commended what he said was the professional way in which the piece was crafted, "The story reveals all the possible motives for Saipov, including possibility of Uzbekistan special services involvement."

Indika Kochkarova, media programmes director at the Foundation for Development of Media Consulting in Central Asia, echoes these sentiments, describing the article as an "extremely bold, relevant and objective story".

Location: Central Asia
Uzbekistan
Turkmenistan
Tajikistan

Topic: Reporting Impact

Focus: Central Asia

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