

Sports, Politics and Private Property in Tajikistan

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The authorities in Tajikistan have taken over a market west of the capital Dushanbe which they plan to tear down and replace with a sports centre.

The complication is that the Sakhovat Market belongs to the wife of Muhiddin Kabiri, leader of the opposition Islamic Movement of Tajikistan.

Kabiri says the confiscation, enforced by a court order, is clearly political.

The market site has changed hands several times since it was first sold off by the Tursunzoda district authorities in 1996.

Tajikistan's anti-corruption agency, which brought the case to court, argues that this initial privatisation process was illegal. It has not explained why this only came to light when the site was bought by the Kabiri family, or why an "assets amnesty" which President Imomali Rahmon issued for all questionable privatisations in 2007 no longer applies.

The authorities argue that the site is needed because there are no decent sports facilities in the area. Kabiri offered to build a sports centre himself, but this was turned down.

The market provides stalls for about 700 traders.

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