

Authoritarian Tajikistan Bans Dictator Parody

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A photoshopped promotional image of Sacha Baron Cohen as the character from his new film with the late North Korean strongman Kim Jong-il.

Authoritarian rulers aren't known for their ability to laugh at themselves.

Perhaps it's no surprise then that authorities in Tajikistan, ruled by strongman Emomali Rakhmon since 1992, have decided not to distribute a new Hollywood comedy by the creator of "Borat" about a fictional Arab dictator stranded in New York.

Tajikistan's state film distribution company denied that the decision not to show "The Dictator," which stars British comedian Sacha Baron Cohen as the flamboyant dictator of the fictional North-African Republic of Wadiya, was politically motivated.

"We didn't even try to bring 'The Dictator' to Tajikistan because of Tajiks' mentality," a company official told journalists on Friday, RIA-Novosti reported.

The film also will not be shown in Turkmenistan, which has a blanket ban on Western films.

Freedom House rated Tajikistan as “not free” in its 2012 report, and Amnesty International last year complained of police misconduct, strict restrictions on the press and violence against women.

Cohen, famous for his outrageous characters, has irked censors in Central Asia before.

His 2006 effort, “Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan,” in which he plays a wildly anti-Semitic Kazakh television host making a documentary about the United States, was banned in the country.

But the country's foreign minister later thanked the filmmakers for boosting tourism to the country.

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