



## ONE OF THE PAINFUL PROBLEMS OF THE CENTRAL ASIAN REGION

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**Abstract:** This article discusses one of the most pressing problems in the Central Asian region, focusing on the issue of Lake Sarez, located in Tajikistan. The author has developed proposals and recommendations regarding this matter.

**Keywords:** Lake Sarez, region, Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region, earthquake.

One of the pressing issues in the Central Asian region is the problem associated with Lake Sarez, located in Tajikistan. The lake, situated among the Pamir Mountains at an altitude of 3,255 meters above sea level, was formed after the Bartang River flow was blocked by a natural dam during an earthquake in 1911. Over time, its depth has reached an astounding 505 meters, which is causing concern among many people. Lake Sarez is located in a seismically active zone, and frequent earthquakes are observed in its vicinity. This situation is raising alarm among many experts and the public.

Due to the frequent earthquakes around Lake Sarez, located among the high mountains, expert scientists refer to it as the "Sleeping Dragon," and concerns about the lake are often voiced.

In November 2020, the British Daily Mail published an article about Lake Sarez in Tajikistan. It described this lake as "a slowly moving natural bomb." The article also stated that a potential disaster at Lake Sarez could lead to the worst natural catastrophe in history.

According to this article, the countries of Central Asia are distinguished not only by their rich nature but also by a number of serious naturally occurring problems.

"Lake Sarez, located in the Pamir Mountains of Tajikistan, poses a significant threat not only to this country but also to other Central Asian countries. This lake, enclosed by a natural dam resulting from a landslide, is not only a natural wonder but also resembles a slowly moving bomb. If a disaster occurs at Sarez and the water is released, it could cause the worst natural catastrophe in history. Millions of tons of water, gravel, and sediment could flow along the Bartang, Panj, and Amu Darya rivers, possibly reaching as far as the Aral Sea. As a result of such a disaster, millions of hectares of land in Central Asia, as well as numerous settlements in Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan, could be flooded," the publication writes, citing statements made by the UN in various years.

Information about Lake Sarez: Lake Sarez is a mountain lake located in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region, a part of Tajikistan. It is a naturally formed lake that resulted from the movement of rock masses.

Lake:

- Height above sea level - 3,255 meters;
- Length - 70-75 km;
- Average width - 3.3 km;
- The deepest point is 505 meters;

- Average depth - 185 meters;
  - The area occupied by the lake is 15,755 m<sup>2</sup>;
- The total volume of lake water is 17 km<sup>3</sup>.

Regarding the concerns associated with this lake, it should be noted that in 1999, experts from the United Nations published their research on the problems of Lake Sarez. In addition to general information about the lake, it also describes the probable scale of the catastrophe that may occur on the lake.

In 2000, an international project began on Lake Sarez under the supervision of the World Bank. A modern monitoring and warning system will be installed on the lake, which will constantly monitor it. Since then, the situation on the lake has been constantly monitored.

Equipment for issuing a warning signal is installed in the natural dam on the lake itself. Here, the operators on duty will sit at the observation points for 24 hours and monitor changes in water and other parameters. When there is a sharp change in the water level, they immediately send a warning signal.

Many experts have expressed their opinion about Lake Sarez. In particular, Russian expert Andrei Zakhvatov expressed his concern when a magnitude 7.2 earthquake occurred near Lake Sarez in 2015.

Concerns about Lake Sarez have also been raised by Uzbek experts. In particular, in 2016, Uzbek expert Ravshan Kadyrov said that Lake Sarez today poses a serious threat to several republics of Central Asia.

According to him, scientific expeditions to explore Lake Sarez were organized even before the collapse of the former union. Researchers estimated that it was impossible to remove the 500-meter dam.

It is difficult to assess the level of resistance of a dam to a stronger natural disaster, which is not built by human hands and the state of its invisible parts is unknown. However, experts argue that the situation can be mathematically modeled.

Other experts also report that if the Sarez Dam breaks, a large area of Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan will be destroyed, and millions of people in these republics will suffer.

Following the resumption of friendly relations between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan since 2018, it was reported that the two countries plan to cooperate in the use of water from Lake Sarez.

In this regard, during the visit of the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev to Tajikistan in August 2018, the President of this country Emomali Rahmon said that in the future it is planned to use the water from Lake Sarez in cooperation with Uzbekistan, "We agreed today to start studying the possibilities of using the clean water resources of the high-mountain Lake Sarez and gave instructions to the relevant ministries and institutions in this regard. In the future, we believe that this project will make a huge contribution to the provision of water to the population of our region."

It is very important that the peoples of Central Asia jointly and collaboratively solve the problems associated with Lake Sarez. The reasons are that ensuring the safety of Lake Sarez is a guarantee of ensuring the safety of the peoples of the entire region.

**References:**

1. Address of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev to the Oliy Majlis on December 29, 2018
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3. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's speech at the solemn ceremony dedicated to the 26th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan "An educated generation is a guarantee of a great future, an entrepreneurial people is a guarantee of a prosperous life, and friendly cooperation is a guarantee of progress."