

Harassment of independent rights activists by the Uzbek authorities.

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The authorities and law enforcement agencies of Uzbekistan continue to harass rights activists, members of independent human rights organizations, opposition, and other dissidents. Independent human rights movement in Uzbekistan has existed in the country since Uzbekistan's independence.

Uzbek independent human rights organizations have shed light on a lot of human rights violations and contributed to the protection of the rights of the citizens of the republic. Since its inception, the human rights movement has been subjected to brutal pressure and provocation by the Uzbek government and its law enforcement agencies.

Human rights activists are beaten during the protests. They are arrested and detained unlawfully in the police stations, put under house arrest, hinder their movements. They are attacked by the hired provocateurs, and denied exit visas.

A lot of human rights activists have been convicted based on the trumped-up charges, usually of economic nature, and jailed for prolonged periods. In detention activists become victims of inhuman treatment by the correctional officers. In fact, despite the phony charges unrelated to their activism, in custody they are believed to be and are treated as political prisoners.

Foreign delegations visited Uzbekistan in 2008 -2009 and noted that the government made positive steps towards improving the protection of human rights.

The European Union, having believed the populist promises of the Uzbek government, lifted the sanctions against Uzbekistan that were imposed after the Andijan tragedy of May 13, 2005. However, these sanctions did not have any impact on Uzbekistan as a whole, except for their “moral” pressure on the government.

The geopolitical interests of the leading world powers related to the fight for the natural resources played a negative role here.

The international community turned a blind eye to the real situation with the human rights in Uzbekistan.

The human rights activists arrested in 2005-2007 are remaining in prisons: Agzam Farmonov, Alisher Karamatov, Norboy Holjigitov, Habibulla Akpulatov, Nosim Isakov, Abdurasul Khudainazarov, poet and human rights activist Yusuf Jumaev and his sons Mashrab and Bobur Jumayevs.

In 2006 a human rights journalist Jamshid Karimov was forcibly committed to a psychiatric hospital, and till today we do not have any communication with him.

A well-known human rights activist Agzam Turgunov and an independent journalist and human rights activist Solijon Abdurakhmanov were arrested and sentenced to the lengthy prison terms in 2008.

Uzbekistan has an institution of amnesty for prisoners. Every year, on the eve of the Independence Day or the Constitution Day the Parliament of the Republic *Oliy Majlis* declare an amnesty. In honor of the 18th anniversary of the Republic's Independence on August 28, 2009 the Parliament of Uzbekistan announced another amnesty. Many prisoners were freed, including notorious thieves and corrupt officials.

Did the amnesty benefit any of imprisoned human rights defenders and members of opposition parties?

No. Only Sanjar Umarov, a political prisoner, was released for reasons of health. The rest, again, were left outside amnesty.

Rights activists get into the amnesty rolls extremely rarely. Prison officials do their best to prevent human rights defenders into these lists. A standard charge is common: insubordination or violation of the regime of a correctional institution.

In 2009 under this pretext, amnesty was refused for human rights activists Agzam Farmonov, Alisher Karamatov, and Norboy Kholjigitov. The imprisoned human rights activist Habibulla Akpulatov was added 3 years to his time.

A political prisoner, a former member of the Uzbekistan Parliament Murod Juraev broke all records. In 1994 he was sentenced to 12 years of imprisonment. His term was extended three times. In April 2009, 4 months before the end of his last term, it was extended for another 3 years.

Political prisoners out of the prominent representatives of the Uzbek intelligentsia like a writer Mamadali Makhmudov, journalists-brothers Mohammad and Rashid Begzhanovs, Gayrat Mehlibaev, and a former member of the Parliament Samandar Kukanov lost all hope to be released. "The detained human rights activists and opposition cannot be corrected!" Say the authorities in Uzbekistan.

Maybe the Uzbek government categorizes the rights activists as enemies of the state, unlike the big thieves and corrupt officials? Or the government is so overwhelmed by the fear of losing power that it makes mountains out of molehills?

A few examples:

- A prisoner of the Colony of Punishment Execution (CPE) No. UYA 64/49 (in Karshi) Norboy Holjigitov (a defender of HRSU, Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan). He suffers from severe diabetes, he lost all his teeth, and his vision has badly deteriorated. He lost about 40 kgs in weight. He is 59 years old.

- The employees CPE UYA 64/49 went into trouble to not "notice" that the prisoner Alisher Karamatov (a defender of HRSU) suffers a severe form of tuberculosis. Only after the insistence of his relatives and his lawyer, he was placed into the infirmary, but there the course of treatment was not completed and he was promptly sent back to the CEP.

The question: what danger to the society do these people present?

In the summer of 2008, in the CEP UYA 64/21 a defender Abdurasul Khudainazarov, tried to commit suicide due to unbearable humiliations/torture.

In the civilized and secular countries human rights activists, be they independent or other, are respected people, both in the society and within the government agencies. The authorities consider them as their assistants and, in many cases, associates in the maintenance of civil society.

In all post-Soviet countries, except for the Baltic states, independent human rights defenders are prosecuted, imprisoned, placed in psychiatric hospitals, and, most brutal of all, are murdered. The stereotype that anyone who criticizes the government is an "enemy of the people" and the enemy of government has remained since the Soviet Union, and it still dominates in post-Soviet countries without change.

Independent rights activists has been constantly persecuted by governments, and it continues. In 2009 the human rights defenders of the Human Rights Alliance and the Committee for the liberation of prisoners of conscience, human rights defenders of the Jizzakh Association, members of the HRSU of Kashkadarya region were several times detained under various pretexts.

On the anniversary of the Andijan tragedy the independent human rights activists wanted to lay wreaths at the Monument of Courage in Tashkent to honor the memory of innocent people killed in Andijan. On May 13, 2009 nine members of the Human Rights Alliance and the Committee of the liberation of prisoners of conscience were placed under house arrest

On May 27, 2009 at 9 am Elena Urlyayeva, Salomat Boimatova and Inur Abdulov were detained when trying to deliver a letter appealing to assist in stopping harassing Uzbek activists to the UN representative. They were taken to the local police station where they were treated very harshly, and Inur Abdulov was severely beaten by the police.

In Summer 2009, a journalist and human rights activist Dilmurod Sayidov was sentenced to 12.5 years in prison!

A human rights activist and a farmer from the Jizzakh region Oyimhon Khidirova was arrested on June, 28. Only on August 30 she was released in the courthouse due to the amnesty. She was tried for daring to protest a large landowner.

Since November 2009 four men have been tried for religious extremism and undermining the existing system. One of the defendants Gaibullo Jalilov is a member of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan. During court hearing the defendants spoke about cruel torture, because of which one of them, Faizullo Ochilov, tried to commit suicide by slashing his wrists. After the first hearing, the court prohibited the participation at the trial of human rights defenders as observers. The prosecutor insists on the long prison sentences, ranging from 14 to 16 years. The trial is not finished yet.

On October 10, 2009 a human rights activist from Ferghana Ganijon Mamathanov was arrested and detained on charges of bribery and extortion. On November 25 he was sentenced to five years in prison. On October 5, 2009 a human rights activist from Tashkent Farhodhon Mukhtarov was sentenced to 4 years on trumped-up charges.

On November 11, 2009 a member of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan Mamir Azimov was arrested by the police in the street and brought to the Jizzakh Department of the Interior. For hours members of the Jizzakh City police department Jahongir Islomov, the head of the criminal investigation department of Jizzakh Nurillo Usanov and the officer of the Internal Affairs Department of the Jizzakh region called Oybek beat the defender, saying "write to whoever you

want, the UN or elsewhere." A complaint of Mamir Asimov submitted to the prosecutor's office was ignored.

On the day of the Parliament elections, December 27, 2009 and the day of the second election round on January 11, 2010 the defenders Bahadir Namazov and Elena Urlayeva were put under house arrest, and, therefore, were disenfranchised.

While the view of the people with power about independent human rights defenders remains the same, the human rights situation in Uzbekistan will never change for the better. All government's arguments that situation with human rights is moving towards positive direction are empty words, populism and fraud, unsupported by actual deeds.

We demand that the Uzbek government releases all imprisoned members of human rights organizations and opposition parties!

We ask the UN member-states to support the efforts to release these persons from the Uzbek prisons!

We believe that for many years the government of Uzbekistan and other officials have been throwing dust into the eyes of the world, deceiving and concealing the true situation with protection of human rights and building of civil society in Uzbekistan.

Bahadir Namazov

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