



HUMAN
RIGHTS
WATCH

“Until the Very End”

Politically Motivated Imprisonment in Uzbekistan



SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This brochure contains extracts from the 121-page report of the same name, published in September 2014.

“Until the Very End”

Politically Motivated Imprisonment in Uzbekistan

Agents of Uzbekistan’s feared National Security Services, the “SNB,” kidnapped Muhammad Bekjanov from his apartment in Kiev, Ukraine in 1999. A prominent member of the peaceful political opposition party *Erk* (Freedom) and editor of one of Uzbekistan’s leading independent newspapers, Bekjanov had fled Tashkent two years earlier in response to a wide-ranging crackdown on Uzbekistan’s political opposition led by the country’s authoritarian president, Islam Karimov. Forcibly returned to Uzbekistan without a hearing, Bekjanov was tried in a closed courtroom amidst allegations that Uzbek authorities had subjected him to electric shocks, beatings with batons, and temporary suffocation. A Tashkent court sentenced him to thirteen years on various charges, including for “threatening the constitutional order.”

Kasan prison colony 64/51 in the southern province of Kashkadarya. In 2013, the International Committee of the Red Cross announced it would stop monitoring places of detention in Uzbekistan, citing authorities’ interference with its standard working procedures.

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At the end of January 2012, just days before Bekjanov's prison sentence was set to expire, he was given an additional five-year sentence for alleged and unspecified "violations of prison rules." Along with another jailed Uzbek journalist and opposition activist, Bekjanov has been imprisoned longer than any other reporter in the world. Bekjanov's alleged crime, like so many other individuals imprisoned on politically motivated charges in Uzbekistan, was his peaceful exercise of fundamental rights, including freedom of speech, association, and assembly. Like other such prisoners, there is no evidence that he has ever committed any act of violence.

Bekjanov is just one of thousands of actual or perceived government opponents and critics the Uzbek government has imprisoned on politically motivated charges to enforce its repressive rule since the early 1990s. The victims span broad categories, including human rights activists, journalists, political opposition activists, religious leaders and believers, cultural figures, artists, entrepreneurs, and others, imprisoned for no other reason than their peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression and the government's identification of them as "enemies of the state."

Based on more than 150 in-depth interviews with the relatives of such prisoners, their lawyers, human rights activists, scholars, and former Uzbek government officials, this report examines the cases of 34 of Uzbekistan's most prominent individuals imprisoned on politically motivated charges. The interviewees also included individuals previously imprisoned on such charges. Human Rights Watch documents the egregious abuses they face in custody and calls on the Uzbek government for their immediate and unconditional release.

Fifteen of those whose cases this report documents are rights activists: Azam Farmonov, Mehriniso Hamdamova, Zulhumor Hamdamova, Isroiljon Kholdorov, Nosim Isakov, Gaybullo Jalilov, Nuriddin Jumaniyazov, Matluba Kamilova, Ganikhon Mamatkhanov, Chuyan Mamatkulov, Zafarjon Rahimov, Yuldash Rasulov, Bobomurod Razzokov, Fahriddin Tillaev, and Akzam Turgunov. Five are journalists: Solijon Abdurakhmanov, Muhammad Bekjanov, Gayrat Mikhliboev, Yusuf Ruzimuradov, and Dilmurod Saidov. Four are opposition activists: Murod Juraev, Samandar Kukanov, Kudratbek Rasulov, and Rustam Usmanov. Three are independent religious figures: Ruhiddin Fahriddinov, Hayrullo Hamidov, and Akram Yuldashev. Seven others are various perceived critics of the government or witnesses to the May 13, 2005 Andijan massacre, when Uzbek government forces shot and killed hundreds of mainly peaceful protesters: Dilorom Abdukodirova, Botirbek Eshkuziev, Bahrom Ibragimov, Davron Kabilov, Erkin Musaev, Davron Tojiev, and Ravshanbek Vafoev.







The cases here do not constitute an exhaustive list of all persons convicted on politically motivated charges in Uzbekistan, nor is their selection meant to privilege some cases over others. Instead, these 34 prisoners, who come from every region of the country, shed light on larger trends of political repression in Uzbekistan and on the government’s attempt to suppress a wide range of independent activity that occurs beyond strict state control. At the same time, many cases illustrate the remarkable talent, creativity, and contributions of Uzbekistan’s independent civil society to the country’s civic development, as well as the immense loss that is caused by their continuing imprisonment.

Human Rights Watch research demonstrates that individuals imprisoned on politically motivated charges experience a wide range of human rights abuses. Of the 34 prisoners whose cases this report documents:

- At least 29 have made credible allegations of torture or ill-treatment during their pretrial custody or in prison;
- At least 18 have been denied access to counsel at critical stages of the investigation or trial, including following conviction when additional prison terms have been added to their original sentences;

(above) After authorities added five years to his prison sentence in 2012, political opposition figure **Rustam Usmanov** passed a handkerchief to his son on which he had written in blood, “SOS! 15 years of waiting for the court! Try me or kill me!”

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(opposite) A copy of a letter written in prison by imprisoned journalist **Dilmurod Saidov** to his family describing prison officials’ efforts to prevent him from filing appeals with the court.

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Адвокат Хасан Махбубов
Ишонгли оқламарди! НЭГА?

Кўшимча қоли яқин ташви адвокат
Хасан Махбубовни самарқанд вилояти,
Жолибай туманидаги ...

Ишхонадаги доводни май ойида ма
қомилганман. Маъра-қўрадан ташви.
ди тиклиб, кўрик "Иш" (Биринчи ташви,
Биринчи дўшанба!) бўлиши меннинг дўст-
ларимга адвокатлик қилди. Бироқ ...
"Иш"лар айнан Хасаннинг "ақли
масхара"лари билан тавобгарлар
зарарли, ёқинларди. Бироқ ишхонада
унга ташви айтинларди.

Ишхона 22 феврал кўни дўст дўшанба-
ли билан мен ҳам, Анорбой Пўлатов
ҳам Х. Махбубовни адвокатликка
дўшди. Ишхонада, Анорбой Эргашев
ҳам уш адвокатликка олиб, ташви
Аликин Хасан Махбубов дўшхонада
Анорбой Пўлатов билан Анорбой
Эргашевга; "Дилмурод Саидов "Ишхона"
ташвидакинг ақли, бу ташви
дўшанбадан дўшанбадан қарши берди-
ган ташвида" деган ташви айтади,
ишхонада сўт Ш. Эргашев адвокат
Х. Махбубовга "ошди" берди.

Дўшанбада, Хасан бундай "дўшанба-
ли" ишхонада менга ишхонада
берди фирмалар орасида ҳам олиб
берди ишхонада.

Хасан Махбубовнинг дўшанбада
ишхонада Самарқандга келиб-кейтиши
ётоқ ва ошхонадаги қароқўрадан
А. Пўлатов, В. Эргашев дўшанбада
Бомондан бўлиб қотманган. Бироқ
у ишхонада қарши берди ошхонада меннинг

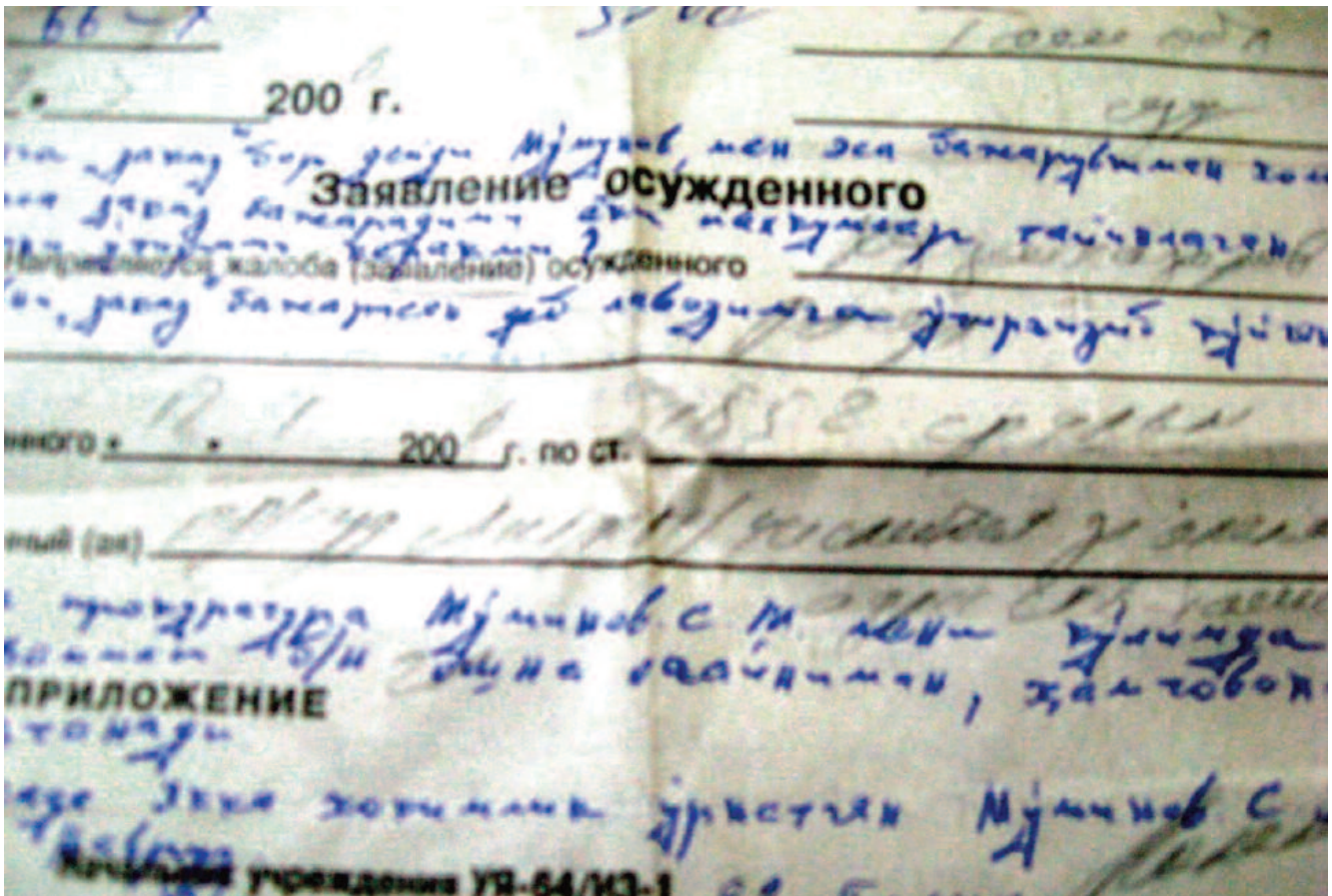


- At least eight have been held in incommunicado detention for at least some period of time longer than allowed by Uzbek and international law;
- At least 6 have been imprisoned for 15 years or longer, with 2 of them, Murod Juraev and Samandar Kukanov, behind bars for more than 20 years, and 22 receiving sentences that are at least 10 years or longer;
- At least 9 are over 60 years old and 4 are women, making these 13 eligible by law for an annual government amnesty, but all have been repeatedly denied amnesty, often on pretexts of committing minor infractions of prison rules;
- At least 11 have had their prison terms arbitrarily extended while in prison on the basis of unpublished, vague, and overly broad “violations of prison rules,” with some prison sentences extended multiple times, including one case where the sentence has been extended on four separate occasions;
- At least 15 have suffered or are currently suffering from critical health problems such as tuberculosis, nerve damage, broken bones, hypertension, heart attacks, and ulcers;

A prisoner at an unidentified prison in Uzbekistan.
Date unknown.

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- At least nine allege they have been denied access to urgently needed medical care;
- At least 12 say they have been subjected to cruel, inhuman, and degrading punishment through extended exposure to hot and cold elements or held in isolation cells in solitary confinement for long periods;
- At least four are either serving or have served periods of their sentence at Uzbekistan’s “Jaslyk” prison, well-known for more than a decade for high-profile reports of torture and ill-treatment over a decade and for the calls by various governments and international bodies for its closure;
- Five were kidnapped from the territory of other countries, including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Ukraine, and forcibly returned to Uzbekistan either in the absence of legal proceedings or in proceedings that did not conform to international human rights norms, and;



Copy of an official complaint written in prison by late rights activist **Abdurasul Khudonazarov**. In late 2013, additional time was added to his prison sentence for “violations of prison rules.”

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- In at least one case, authorities have forcibly disappeared a prisoner, failing to reveal the whereabouts or condition of the prisoner for such a lengthy period of time that it is unclear whether the person is dead or alive.

This report presents an individual profile of each of the 34 individuals currently imprisoned on politically motivated charges. It highlights the most up-to-date information available on the nature of their work prior to imprisonment, the charges brought against them, reports of torture or ill-treatment in pretrial custody and after conviction, their current whereabouts, and the state of their health.

The abuses suffered by those imprisoned on politically motivated charges in Uzbekistan include denial of access to counsel, incommunicado detention, pretrial and post-conviction torture, solitary confinement, the denial of appropriate medical care, and the arbitrary denial of amnesty

and extension of prison sentences. These are all serious violations of Uzbekistan’s domestic and international human rights obligations.

Information gathered by Human Rights Watch shows that in many cases the conditions in which persons imprisoned on politically motivated charges are held—overcrowded cells, poor quality and insufficient food and water, and inadequate medical treatment—do not meet international prison standards. Authorities have routinely denied these prisoners treatment for serious medical problems, many of which emerged over the course of prolonged imprisonment. Authorities neither monitor nor remedy the poor prison conditions that may have caused and then exacerbated such health problems in violation of Uzbekistan’s core international human rights obligations. Failure to provide adequate health care or medical treatment to a detainee in prison may contribute to conditions amounting to inhuman or degrading treatment.

Human Rights Watch research indicates that prison officials have wide discretion over who to release under amnesty and sometimes receive instructions from government officials to find justifications to keep persons imprisoned on politically motivated charges incarcerated despite their ostensible eligibility for amnesty.



We also found that prison authorities regularly extend the sentences of those imprisoned on politically motivated charges for so-called “violations of prison rules.” Of 34 current prisoners and 10 former prisoners profiled in this report, at least 14 have had their sentences arbitrarily extended in prison, many more than once—four times in the case of political opposition figure Murod Juraev—often in proceedings that occur without due process.

Uzbekistan’s Criminal Code creates the offense of “disobedience to legitimate orders of administration of institution of execution of penalty” (article 221), often referred to as “violations of prison rules,” on which authorities base the extensions of prisoners’ sentences. However, while the general regulations on the administration of prisons, issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, set out a range of behaviors that prisoners are both required to and prohibited from engaging in, they leave wide scope for determining what constitutes a “legitimate order” that should not be disobeyed. The guidelines also are not comprehensive as to what would constitute “violations” for the purpose of article 221. Human Rights Watch is not aware of any publicly available source that alerts prisoners to what all these “violations” might be. The government did not reply to a request for such information and none of the former prisoners, family members of prisoners, or

A guard in a solitary confinement block at an unidentified prison in Uzbekistan. Date unknown.

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their lawyers could provide Human Rights Watch with any source that sets out or defines the full scope of potential “violations”.

Human Rights Watch’s research indicates that authorities have based multi-year extensions of sentences on minor, insignificant, or absurd alleged infractions, such as “failure to lift a heavy object,” “wearing a white shirt,” “failing to properly place one’s shoes in the corner,” and “failing to properly sweep the cell.” Our interviews with numerous former prisoners, their lawyers, civil society activists, and a senior prison official demonstrate that prison officials interpret broad regulations arbitrarily and in an entirely ad hoc fashion, as a pretext to extend sentences or deny amnesty eligibility and thereby punish those imprisoned on politically motivated charges.

Compounding the above abuses, there is no adequate monitoring of places of detention in Uzbekistan and all individuals imprisoned on politically motivated charges lack access to meaningful complaint mechanisms. These problems

have only grown worse since the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was forced to end its visits to detainees and prisoners in April 2013 due to Uzbek government interference in its standard operating procedures. Deplorable incarceration conditions include beatings and torture, solitary confinement, sexual humiliation, exposure to harsh climactic conditions, tuberculosis, and other infectious diseases that cause psychological and physical damage to inmates.

Despite the commitments Uzbekistan has made relating to the protection of human rights, including the freedoms of expression, assembly, association, and religion guaranteed in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the prohibition on torture enshrined in the Convention against Torture, it has faced virtually no consequences for its persistent refusal to acknowledge the existence of any individuals imprisoned on politically motivated charges, release them from prison, improve their treatment in custody, or end the cycle of crackdown, arrests, and convictions. Nor has the government paid any real cost for its systematic failure to cooperate with international institutions, including eleven special procedures of the United Nations Human Rights Council, various UN treaty bodies such as the Human Rights Committee and Committee against Torture, or the ICRC.

The governments traditionally viewed as champions of the cause of human rights in Uzbekistan—the United States, the European Union, and several EU member states—have publicly criticized Uzbekistan’s atrocious rights record in past years, most strongly in the immediate aftermath of the Andijan massacre by placing sanctions and restrictions on the Uzbek government. EU and US officials have raised the cases of some of the current and former prisoners described in this report; however, in the past five years they have muted their criticisms and softened their human rights policies with respect to politically motivated imprisonment. Unfortunately, the Uzbek government’s continued failure to release persons convicted on politically motivated grounds has not had a substantial impact on these international actors’ relations with Uzbekistan, on which they continue to rely for its geostrategic importance as a transit route in the context of the war in Afghanistan.

Significantly, when the Uzbek government has faced sustained external pressure, including sanctions, restrictions on military assistance, and other robust, public, specific criticism from its international partners, it has responded by taking incremental steps to improve human rights, including by releasing some individuals imprisoned on politically motivated charges on the eve of key bilateral summits or high-level visits. But in the absence of such pressure, the Uzbek government has defied international calls for human rights improvements, even denying that any problems exist.

In September 2013, for example, during the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Uzbekistan—an examination of Uzbekistan’s human rights record before the UN Human Rights Council—Akmal Saidov, head of the Uzbek delegation, ignored

the chorus of recommendations from governments and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to release immediately and unconditionally Uzbekistan’s political prisoners, even declaring that “there are no political prisoners in Uzbekistan.” Refusing to acknowledge the existence of even a single wrongfully imprisoned individual, Saidov instead pounded his fists on the table, defiantly dismissing the recommendations as based on “misinformation and lies” designed by “politically motivated” NGOs solely to tarnish Uzbekistan’s reputation.

Despite the Uzbek government’s resistance to acknowledge the problem, international pressure can be extremely effective in securing the release of persons imprisoned on politically motivated charges. The findings of this report should remind Uzbekistan’s international partners, including members of the UN Human Rights Council, the US and the EU, and other concerned governments, regional bodies, and international financial institutions of the urgent need to focus on the crisis of politically motivated imprisonment in Uzbekistan and to redouble efforts to secure these and other wrongfully detained individuals’ immediate and unconditional release.

Human Rights Watch strongly believes that the Uzbek government’s continued refusal to release wrongfully imprisoned individuals and lack of any meaningful progress on human rights for more than a decade should trigger in key capitals such as Washington, Brussels, Berlin, and London and at the UN Human Rights Council an assessment of their current strategies for pursuing improvements in Uzbekistan. Given president Islam Karimov’s long record of defying calls to implement meaningful reform, years after Western governments had eased sanctions on the country as a way to encourage reform, Uzbekistan’s international partners should convey a clear and consistent message to Tashkent, both in public and in private, about the urgent need for measurable, concrete steps, including the release of all those imprisoned on politically motivated charges, in addition to steps to address other serious human rights violations. They should also publicly acknowledge Tashkent’s systematic retrenchment on rights and be ready to follow through with meaningful policy consequences, some which Human Rights Watch outlines below, should the Uzbek government continue to commit widespread human rights abuses.

Without a fundamental shift in approach in Tashkent and with absent sustained, robust, and public international pressure, the atrocious situation in Uzbekistan will continue and the suffering of Muhammad Bekjanov, Yusuf Ruzimuradov, Murod Juraev, Samandar Kukanov, Dilorom Abdukodirova, their families, the others profiled in this report, and countless others, is sure to get worse.

PROFILES OF INDIVIDUALS IMPRISONED ON POLITICALLY MOTIVATED CHARGES

HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

Uzbekistan's rights activists face the constant threat of severe government reprisal, including imprisonment, torture, harassment, and other forms of pressure. The government routinely interferes in the activities of both domestic and international rights groups, making it nearly impossible for them to carry out their work. This includes: preventing groups from gaining registration, making it illegal for them to accept any kind of grants or other assistance of funding; denying activists exit visas to prevent them from participating in trainings or international conferences; placing activists under surveillance; and frequently subjecting activists to beatings, arbitrary detention and house arrest. Authorities also block international rights groups, including Human Rights Watch, from operating in Uzbekistan and have aggressively pursued rights activists living in exile.



AZAM FARONOV

BORN: 1979

ARRESTED: April 29, 2006

CHARGES: Extortion

SENTENCED: June 15, 2006; 9 years

AZAM FARONOV has been tortured repeatedly since his arrest in 2006. He is currently held at Jaslyk prison. UN bodies and several governments have called for Jaslyk to be closed after repeated allegations of torture.

© Tolib Yakubov



ISROILJON Kholdorov

BORN: August 23, 1951

KIDNAPPED FROM KYRGYZSTAN: June 10, 2006

CHARGES: "Threatening the constitutional order," "unlawful entry or exit into Uzbekistan," and "preparing or distributing documents that threaten the public order"

SENTENCED: February 2007; 6 years; extended by 3 years

Following the May 2005 Andijan massacre, **ISROILJON Kholdorov** spoke to international media about mass graves in Andijan. Uzbek authorities later kidnapped him in 2005 from neighboring Kyrgyzstan, where he had fled for safety, brought him back to Uzbekistan and imprisoned him. He is serving a 10 year sentence but his relatives fear his sentence could be further extended.

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GAYBULLO JALIYOV

BORN: August 24, 1964
ARRESTED: June 8, 2009
CHARGES: “Hooliganism” and extortion
SENTENCED: August 4, 2010; 11 years, 1 month, 5 days

By the time of his arrest in 2009 rights activist **GAYBULLO JALIYOV** had collected information on over 200 arrests of independent Muslims in his native province of Kashkadarya. He is currently serving an 11 year sentence in Navoi prison

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NURIDDIN JUMANIYAZOV

BORN: October 8, 1948
ARRESTED: January 2, 2014
CHARGES: human trafficking
SENTENCED: March 2014; 8 years, 3 months

Before his arrest and torture by authorities in 2014, **NURIDDIN JUMANIYAZOV** headed the Tashkent chapter of the Union of Independent Trade Unions, which protects the rights of labor migrants.

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GANIKHON MAMATKHANOV

BORN: 1951
ARRESTED: October 12, 2009
CHARGES: Fraud and attempted bribery
SENTENCED: November 25, 2009; 5 years; sentence extended for an unspecified period

Authorities should have released imprisoned rights activist **GANIKHON MAMATKHANOV** in March 2014 but extended his sentence for unspecified “violations of prison rules” following a closed hearing.

© Abduljalil Boymatov, Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan



CHUYAN MAMATKULOV

BORN: 1970
ARRESTED: August 2012
CHARGES: 12 different charges, including narcotics sale, extortion, kidnapping, religious extremism, and racketeering

Rights activist **CHUYAN MAMATKULOV**, imprisoned in Navoi, photographed here with his two children in the Kashkadarya province.

© Private

HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS



ZAFARJON RAHIMOV

BORN: August 24, 1964
ARRESTED: June 8, 2009
CHARGES: “Hooliganism”
and extortion
SENTENCED: August 4, 2010;
11 years, 1 month, 5 days

Imprisoned activist **ZAFARJON RAHIMOV** defended the rights of farmer and pious Muslims prior to his 2007 arrest. He was to have been released in 2013, but authorities at his prison colony in Karavulbazar in the southern province of Bukhara, extended his sentence for an unspecified period of time.

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YULDASH RASULOV

BORN: October 8, 1948
ARRESTED: January 2, 2014
CHARGES: human trafficking
SENTENCED: March 2014;
8 years, 3 months

YULDASH RASULOV is a rights activist from Karshi currently imprisoned on charges of “threatening the constitutional order” and “membership in a banned religious organization.”

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BOBOMUROD RAZZAKOV

BORN: 1951
ARRESTED: October 12, 2009
CHARGES: Fraud and attempted
bribery
SENTENCED: November 25, 2009;
5 years; sentence extended for an
unspecified period

BOBOMUROD RAZZAKOV, 61, is the head of the Bukhara office of Ezgulik. He was arrested on fabricated charges of human trafficking and sentenced to four years imprisonment in September 2013.

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FAHRIDDIN TILLAEV

BORN: 1970
ARRESTED: August 2012
CHARGES: 12 different charges,
including narcotics sale,
extortion, kidnapping, religious
extremism, and racketeering

Since 2005 **FAHRIDDIN TILLAEV** has advocated for workers’ rights in southeastern Uzbekistan. He was arrested in 2014, and authorities stuck needles between his fingers and toes to force him into a false confession for human trafficking. He is serving a 8 year sentence in Navoi prison.

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AKZAM TURGUNOV

BORN: August 24, 1964

ARRESTED: June 8, 2009

CHARGES: “Hooliganism” and extortion

SENTENCED: August 4, 2010; 11 years, 1 month, 5 days

In 2012 Foreign Policy magazine called imprisoned activist **AKZAM TURGUNOV** one of the world’s “unsung heroes” for his work monitoring trials and defending the rights of vulnerable groups in Uzbekistan. Turgunov was tortured in pre-trial custody and is currently serving a 10-year sentence in Karshi.

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NOSIM ISAKOV

BORN: November 12, 1966

ARRESTED: October 27, 2005

CHARGES: “Hooliganism” and extortion

SENTENCED: December 2005; 8 years; sentence extended for unspecified period



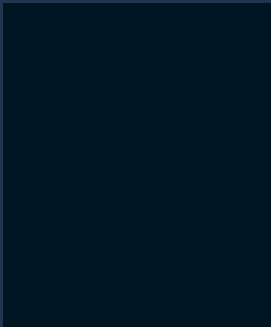
MATLUBA KAMILOVA

BORN: 1960

ARRESTED: September 6, 2010

CHARGES: Narcotics possession

SENTENCED: 11 years



MEHRINISO and ZULHUMOR HAMDAMOVA

BORN: 1969 and 1960, respectively

ARRESTED: November 5, 2009

CHARGES: “Threatening the President,” “threatening the constitutional order,” “forming, leading, or membership in an extremist, fundamentalist, or otherwise banned organization,” and “holding unsanctioned religious gatherings”

SENTENCED: April 12, 2010; 6.5-7 years

JOURNALISTS

Despite legislation ostensibly protecting freedom of speech, in practice, censorship is the norm and freedom of expression in Uzbekistan is severely limited. Foreign correspondents and Uzbek citizens working for independent or foreign media are not allowed to operate without accreditation, which since the Andijan massacre in 2005, has been impossible to obtain in practice. The few independent journalists who continue to work in the country do so at great risk and are forced to self-censor due to harassment, detention, and threats of imprisonment for their work.¹

Uzbek websites providing critical information are blocked, including Fergananeews.com, Uznews.net, and Muslimuzbekistan.org. News agencies such as the New York Times, the BBC, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Voice of America, and Deutsche Welle are unable or forbidden to operate in Uzbekistan. Websites of international human rights organizations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International are blocked.



SOLIJON ABDURAKHMANOV

BORN: May 28, 1950
ARRESTED: June 7, 2008
CHARGES: narcotics possession
SENTENCED: October 10, 2008;
10 years

Imprisoned since 2010, authorities repeatedly hid journalist **SOLIJON ABDURAKHMANOV** from representatives of the International Committee for the Red Cross when they tried to visit him in Karshi prison.

© Uznews.net



DILMUROD SAIDOV

BORN: October 8, 1948
ARRESTED: January 2, 2014
CHARGES: human trafficking
SENTENCED: March 2014;
8 years, 3 months

DILMUROD SAIDOV is an investigative journalist known for his muckraking reports on corruption. Saidov suffers from tuberculosis and is imprisoned near Karshi. His brother, Obid, told Human Rights Watch that his brother “is no longer living, but merely existing.”

© Fergananeews.com



GAYRAT MIKHLIBOEV

BORN: September 27, 1979
ARRESTED: July 24, 2002
CHARGES: Various, including “inciting national, racial, ethnic, or religious tension,” “threatening the constitutional order,” and “founding, leading, or membership in a religious extremist, separatist, fundamentalist or other banned religious group”
SENTENCED: February 18, 2003;
6 years; sentence extended for
5 years



MUHAMMAD BEKJANOV and YUSUF RUZIMURADOV

BORN: October 1, 1954 and 1958, respectively
KIDNAPPED FROM UKRAINE: March 1999
CHARGES: Various, including “threatening the life of the president,” “threatening the constitutional order,” and “organization of banned civil groups and religious organizations”
SENTENCED: March 15, 1999; 15 years;
sentences extended for an unspecified period

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, **MUHAMMAD BEKJANOV**—seen above in his Kiev apartment, circa 1998—along with imprisoned journalist **YUSUF RUZIMURADOV** (no photo), is the world’s longest imprisoned journalist, unlawfully held in Uzbekistan since 1999.

© Private

POLITICAL OPPOSITION ACTIVISTS

In the 23 years since Uzbekistan gained independence from the Soviet Union, there has not been a single election deemed even remotely “free and fair” by international monitoring bodies. President Karimov, who in 2014 entered his twenty-fifth year of consecutive rule, uses the dominant executive branch to repress all political opposition. No opposition parties are allowed to participate in the political process. Karimov’s political opponents have either been forced to flee the country or are in prison. The government has aggressively jailed and extended the prison terms of opposition activists, some for over 20 years, making them some of the world’s longest serving political prisoners.



KUDRATBEK RASULOV

BORN: 1970

ARRESTED: September 6, 2013

CHARGES: “Threatening the constitutional order” and “production and dissemination of materials that contain threat to public safety and public order with foreign financial support”

SENTENCED: December 27, 2013; 8 years

A native of Uzbekistan’s Fergana valley, opposition activist **KUDRATBEK RASULOV**, was sentenced to 8 years in prison in 2013 for allegedly corresponding over Skype with opposition activists based in Europe.



MUROD JURAEV

BORN: September 5, 1952

KIDNAPPED FROM KAZAKHSTAN: September 18, 1994

CHARGES: Various, including “high treason,” “conspiracy with a purpose of seizure of power,” and “calls for violent overthrow of constitutional order or forcible violation of the unity of the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan”

SENTENCED: May 31, 1995; 12 years; sentence extended on four occasions

Opposition politician **MUROD JURAEV** was arrested in 1994. Authorities have extended his sentence four times for so-called “violations of prison rules,” including “peeling carrots incorrectly.”

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RUSTAM USMANOV

BORN: 1948

ARRESTED: 1998

CHARGES: Extortion, unlawful transactions of foreign currency, abuse of authority, and forgery

SENTENCED: 1998; 14 years; sentence extended by 5 years

Imprisoned since 1998 for alleged financial crimes, **RUSTAM USMANOV** founded Uzbekistan’s first private bank and supported the Erk opposition party.

© Fergananews.com



SAMANDAR KUKANOV

BORN: 1945

ARRESTED: June 1992

CHARGES: Economic crimes linked to alleged financing of the Erk opposition party

SENTENCED: May 1993; 20 years; sentence extended for 3 years

INDEPENDENT RELIGIOUS FIGURES

The most numerically significant category of politically motivated arrests and convictions in Uzbekistan is among the country's independent Muslims; that is, those who practice their faith outside strict state controls or who belong to unregistered religious organizations. The government continues to wage an unrelenting, multi-year campaign of arbitrary detention, ill-treatment, and torture against them.² Since 1999 thousands of independent Muslims have been incarcerated for nonviolent offenses.³



HAYRULLO HAMIDOV

BORN: December 7, 1975

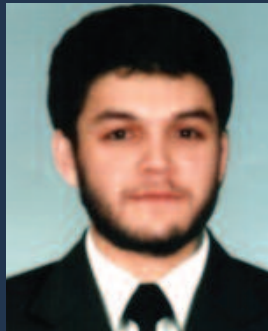
ARRESTED: January 23, 2010

CHARGES: "Membership in a banned religious-extremist organization" and "possession of materials containing ideas of religious extremism and threatening to public safety"

SENTENCED: May 2010; 6 years

Independent religious figure and journalist **HAYRULLO HAMIDOV** hosted a radio show on religious and social topics that was popular with youth. He has been in prison on trumped up extremism charges since 2010.

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RUHIDDIN FAHRIDDINOV

BORN: 1967

KIDNAPPED FROM KAZAKHSTAN: November 24, 2005

CHARGES: 22 charges, among them terrorism, sabotage, organization of illegal religious groups, activity against the constitution, and the dissemination of materials that threaten state security

SENTENCED: September 15, 2007; 17 years

Authorities have repeatedly tortured imprisoned religious leader **RUHIDDIN FAHRIDDINOV** since kidnapping him in Kazakhstan in 2005 and forcibly returning him to Uzbekistan on extremism charges.

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AKRAM YULDASHEV

BORN: July 25, 1963

ARRESTED: February 17, 1999

CHARGES: Various, including "terrorism," "organization of banned civil groups and religious organizations," "membership in a banned religious-extremist organization" and "possession of materials containing ideas of religious extremism and threatening to public safety"

SENTENCED: March 1999; 17 years

A screenshot of imprisoned spiritual leader **AKRAM YULDASHEV** allegedly confessing on Uzbekistan's state-controlled television to organizing the May 2005 protests in Andijan. His family has not heard from or seen him for three years.

© 2005 BBC

ANDIJAN AND OTHER “INTERNAL ENEMIES”

Since the Andijan massacre the government has aggressively pursued, detained, tortured, and prosecuted anyone believed to have either participated in or witnessed the events. The government has also taken steps to suppress and manipulate the truth about the massacre. Between September 2005 and July 2006, in 22 flawed and closed trials, courts convicted and sentenced at least 303 people to lengthy prison terms on various charges of extremism.⁴ Nearly all of these people, many of whom allege that they have been or continue to suffer torture in detention, remain in prison.⁵ The government also continues to aggressively pursue the return of individuals who fled the country following the atrocity. In some cases, it has sought to lure people back by providing assurances that no harm will come to them.⁶ In several cases where refugees agreed to return, including in the case of Dilorom Abdukodirova, those assurances proved false.



DILOROM ABDUKODIROVA

BORN: 1966

ARRESTED: March 2010

CHARGES: Illegal border crossing and “threatening the constitutional order”

SENTENCED: April 30, 2010; 10 years, 2 months; sentence extended by 8 years



ERKIN MUSAEV

BORN: May 9, 1967

ARRESTED: January 31, 2006

CHARGES: Various charges, including high treason, sharing government secrets, abuse of power, and neglect of duty

SENTENCED: June 13 and 14, 2006; 16 years; sentence extended by 4 years

An eye-witness to the Andijan massacre, **DILOROM ABDUKODIROVA** fled in 2005 to Kyrgyzstan, then Australia. In 2010, after returning to Uzbekistan to reunite with her husband and children, authorities arrested her at the Tashkent airport, prosecuted her on charges of “extremism.” Abdukodirova suffered ill-treatment in custody.

© Private

ERKIN MUSAEV served in the Ministry of Defense and then the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) before being imprisoned on espionage charges in 2006.

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BOTIRBEK ESHKUZIEV, BAHROM IBRAGIMOV, DAVRON KABILOV, DAVRON TOJIEV, and RAVSHANBEK VAFOEV

BORN: 1978, 1977, 1973, 1981, and 1971, respectively

ARRESTED: June 27, 2008 (Ibragimov); August 16, 2008 (Eshkuziev, Kabilov, and Vafoev); September 27, 2008 (Tojiev)

CHARGES: Various, including “disseminating materials or information threatening to the public order” and “establishing, leading, or participation in a religious extremist, separatist, fundamentalist or other banned organization”

SENTENCED: February 26, 2009; Ibragimov and Kabilov to 12 years, Vafoev to 10 years, and Eshkuziev to 8 years; April 8, 2009; Tojiev to 8 years

FORMER POLITICAL PRISONERS



In January 2008, while serving his 14 and half year sentence at Kyzyltepa prison authorities placed peaceful political opposition figure **SANJAR UMAROV** in an open-air cell, or “monkey cage,” for five days in below-freezing temperatures.

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KAYUM ORTIKOV is a former employee of the British Embassy in Tashkent who was tortured to extract a confession of espionage for the UK. Released in 2009, he fled Uzbekistan and now lives in the US with his family.

© 2012 Kayum Ortikov



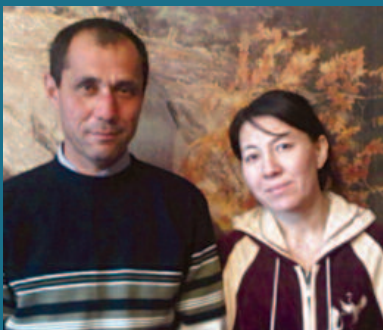
Rights activist **GULNAZA YULDASHEVA** was imprisoned in July 2012 on extortion charges after conducting an investigation into officials’ involvement in human trafficking.

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Human Rights Watch



Prison guards tortured rights activist and former prisoner **MUTABAR TAJIBAEVA** (center) during her nearly three years of imprisonment in Tashkent Women’s Prison. She now lives in Paris, France.

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FARKHODKHON MUKHTAROV and wife **SURAYO** five days after his release from prison in December 2010. His release came one day after US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton publicly promised to raise cases of imprisoned human rights activists with President Karimov during a visit to Tashkent.

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Writer and opposition figure **MAHMADALI MAHMUDOV** was released in 2013 after serving over 14 years on trumped-up charges of extremism. He suffered torture and had his sentence extended in prison.

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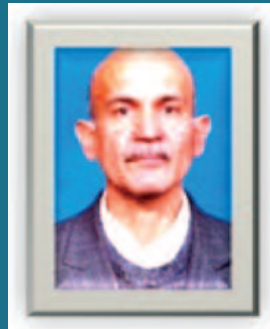
In 2013, Fergana valley-based activist **NEMATJON SIDDIKOV** was arrested after his family was assaulted at home by unknown assailants following his investigation into local police corruption. He was sentenced to six years but later released under amnesty.

© 2013 Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan



Former prisoner **NORBOI KHOLJIGITOV**, president of the Ishtikhan branch of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan (HRSU) in Samarkand province, following his release from prison in 2011. He developed diabetes during his incarceration.

© 2011 Bahtiyor Hamraev



Rights activist **ABDURASUL KHUDOYNazarov** died only 26 days following his release from prison in 2014 on the same day that officials diagnosed him with advanced liver cancer. He told rights groups before his death that officials denied his requests for medical treatment.

© Ezgulik



75 year-old rights activist **TURABOI JURABOEV** was sentenced to 5 years imprisonment in 2013 and suffered torture in custody before being amnestied.

© Fiery Hearts Club

RECOMMENDATIONS

TO THE GOVERNMENT OF UZBEKISTAN

- **Immediately and unconditionally release** all persons whose cases are detailed in this report and all other prisoners held for peaceful expression of their political views, civil society activism, journalistic activity, or religious views. To the extent that any such individuals are also alleged to have engaged in acts of violence, they should be granted a new and fair trial according to international standards.
- **Take immediate steps to eliminate torture and ill-treatment** in pretrial detention and penal facilities, including by ensuring unhindered access to counsel at all stages of investigations, ensuring prompt access to appropriate medical care and re-establishing the independent monitoring of prisons.
- **Ensure fair trials for all defendants.** Promptly investigate all allegations of judicial procedural violations and ensure that judges take into account allegations of torture and witnesses' allegations of coercion on the part of investigators, exclude all evidence procured through the use of torture or ill-treatment, and thoroughly investigate allegations of fabrication of evidence.
- **Provide families of all prisoners** with full information regarding the location and current health conditions of their relatives. **Rigorously investigate all allegations of intimidation or reprisals** against family members and prisoners who communicate with journalists, human rights defenders, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).
- **Investigate and hold to account** all officials, security service personnel, and penal system staff alleged to have tortured or ill-treated prisoners and detainees or denied requests for medical care.
- **Comply with the United Nations Convention against Torture** and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and **ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture**, which requires Uzbekistan to permit visits by the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (SPT) and to establish an independent national preventive mechanism for the prevention of torture at the domestic level.
- **Immediately and fully implement** the November 2013 recommendations of the UN Committee against Torture and the February 2003 recommendations issued by the UN special rapporteur on torture following his visit to Uzbekistan in 2002, including the immediate closure of Jaslyk prison 64/71.
- **Approve the pending requests by eleven UN special procedures** to visit Uzbekistan, including the UN special rapporteur on torture; **allow unimpeded independent monitoring of prisons by the International Committee of the Red Cross** and other independent monitors.
- **Cease the practice of arbitrarily exempting prisoners held on politically motivated charges** who qualify for amnesty from annual amnesty declarations and of **arbitrarily lengthening of prison** sentences for minor offences or "violations of prison rules" under article 221 of the criminal code on "disobedience to the terms of punishment."
- **Clarify and bring into line with international standards** overbroad criminal articles such as article 158 on "threatening the president," article 159 on "threatening the constitutional order," and article 244(2) on "forming, leading, or membership in an extremist, fundamentalist, or otherwise banned organization," which are frequently manipulated to target people expressing their legitimate right to freedom of expression, speech, or religion.

- **Remove criminal responsibility for libel and insult** (articles 139 and 140 of the criminal code, respectively) in line with international standards and protect freedom of speech and expression.
- **End the crackdown** on civil society and allow human rights defenders, journalists, and others to operate free from harassment or other forms of undue government interference. **Allow local human rights groups to register** and re-register foreign NGOs that were liquidated or otherwise forced to cease operating in Uzbekistan, including through granting visas and accreditation to their staff.

TO THE EUROPEAN UNION AND EU MEMBER STATES

- Given Uzbekistan’s appalling human rights record and persistent failure to meet the human rights criteria articulated by EU foreign ministers, EU member states and institutions **should urgently take up the human rights situation in Uzbekistan with a view to devising an appropriate policy response.**

SPECIFICALLY, EU MEMBER STATES AND INSTITUTIONS SHOULD

- Consider concrete measures to **give real, practical meaning to the Foreign Affairs Council’s (FAC) pledge** to make “the depth and quality” of the relationship directly “depend[ent] on Uzbek reforms and progress.”
- The EU High Representative and EU foreign ministers should **set a timeline for Uzbek government compliance with the FAC human rights criteria and consider the specific policy consequences that would follow should it not, such as instituting targeted restrictive measures against Uzbek government entities and individuals responsible for grave human rights violations** in the country. Such measures should include imposing visa bans and asset freezes with respect to individuals responsible for torture and ill-treatment and the impunity with which these abuses occur, the imprisonment of human rights defenders, journalists, and political opposition figures, and the repression and harassment of independent civil society.

OTHER SPECIFIC MEASURES THE EU SHOULD TAKE

- Given the Uzbek government’s failure to cooperate with UN human rights bodies and the continued pattern of serious and widespread human rights violations in Uzbekistan, **support the establishment by the Human Rights Council of a country-specific mechanism in the form of a special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Uzbekistan.**
- Press the Uzbek government to **permit the registration of local human rights groups and the re-registration of foreign NGOs**, including through granting visas and accreditation to their staff.
- Representatives of the EU diplomatic mission and of EU member states in Tashkent should **monitor closely and respond to the Uzbek government’s record of politically motivated imprisonment, harassment of human rights defenders, and torture**, including through regular contact with local rights groups, monitoring of trials, raising and following up with the authorities on concerns about specific cases, and requesting periodic visits to places of detention.
- **Raise concerns related to politically motivated imprisonment, torture, and due process violations at every opportunity, including but not limited to the EU-Uzbekistan human rights dialogue**, making publicly available the specific questions raised during the dialogue in this regard and the concrete steps the Uzbek government should take to address the concerns of the EU and EU member states in this area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

TO THE UNITED STATES

- Given Uzbekistan’s persistent refusal to make “substantial and continuing progress” in its human rights record as outlined in the Consolidated Appropriations Act or to meaningfully address the egregious abuses documented by the US Department of State in its annual country reports on human rights and by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, the US government should **urgently place the human rights situation in Uzbekistan more prominently on its bilateral agenda.**
- **Set a timeline** within which the Uzbek government is expected to undertake concrete human rights improvements.
- **Make clear specific policy consequences** that will follow if it does not. Such consequences should include imposing targeted restrictive measures such as asset freezes and visa bans (some of which already exist) against Uzbek government entities and individuals responsible for grave human rights violations in the country, including those responsible for torture and ill-treatment, politically motivated imprisonment, and the harassment of independent civil society.

OTHER SPECIFIC MEASURES THE US SHOULD TAKE

- **Immediately cease all security assistance programs, including direct military aid,** to the Uzbek government until it takes meaningful steps to combat torture and address other human rights abuses.
- Given the Uzbek government’s failure to cooperate with United Nations human rights bodies and given the continued pattern of serious and widespread human rights violations in Uzbekistan, **support the establishment by the Human Rights Council of a country-specific mechanism in the form of a special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Uzbekistan.**
- Press the Uzbek government to **permit the registration of local human rights groups and the re-registration of foreign NGOs,** including through granting visas and accreditation to their staff.
- US embassy officials should **monitor closely and respond to the Uzbek government’s record on politically motivated imprisonment, harassment of human rights defenders, and torture,** including through regular contact with local rights groups, monitoring of trials, and requesting updated information on the condition of individuals already in prison; keeping records of allegations of torture; raising with the authorities concerns about specific cases; and requesting periodic visits to places of detention.
- **Raise concerns related to politically motivated imprisonment, torture, and the harassment and repression of civil society activists at every opportunity of US-Uzbek dialogue,** including but not limited to the US-Uzbekistan Annual Bilateral Consultations, making publicly available the specific questions raised and the concrete steps the Uzbek government should take to address US concerns in this area.
- **Lift the waiver in place on existing sanctions,** including a ban on visits to the US by high-level officials, which are outlined in the designation by the State Department that Uzbekistan is a “country of particular concern” for its systematic violations of religious freedom, including for the use of torture.

TO THE UNITED NATIONS

- Given the Uzbek government's failure to cooperate with United Nations human rights bodies and the continued pattern of serious and widespread human rights violations in Uzbekistan, **the Human Rights Council should establish a country-specific mechanism in the form of a special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Uzbekistan.**
- **Relevant UN special procedures, including the special rapporteurs on torture and on the situation for human rights defenders, should renew their pending requests for invitations to visit Uzbekistan** and use every opportunity to highlight concern and request information from the Uzbek government in the form of public press releases, urgent appeals, and communications about the situation in Uzbekistan relating to their mandates.
- **Relevant UN treaty bodies should take up concerns relating to the arrest, detention, torture, and imprisonment of persons on politically motivated charges and to the failure of judicial reforms in all periodic reviews of Uzbekistan,** building on the welcome emphasis on these issues by the Human Rights Committee and Committee against Torture, as reflected in their respective concluding observations resulting from their 2007, 2010, and 2013 reviews of Uzbekistan.

1 Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2013*, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2013), Uzbekistan chapter, http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/wr2013_web.pdf, p. 507.

2 Human Rights Watch, *Creating Enemies of the State*.

3 Ibid.

4 Human Rights Watch, *Saving Its Secrets: Government Repression in Andijan*, May 2008, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2008/uzbekistan0508/4.htm>, p.12.

5 "Human Rights Watch Submission to the United Nations Committee Against Torture on Uzbekistan," Human Rights Watch statement, October 2013, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/10/28/human-rights-watch-submission-united-nations-committee-against-torture-uzbekistan>; Bahtiyor Muhtarov, "Andijan Refugees Speak Out," Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan, November 2010, <http://en.hrsu.org/archives/836> (accessed September 11, 2014), including "List of Participants and Witnesses to the Events of 13 and 14 May 2005 Who Are Currently Imprisoned"; Vitaly Ponomarev, "List of Persons Arrested on Political or Religious Motives in Uzbekistan (January 2004-December 2008)," Memorial Human Rights Center, Moscow, 2009, p. 17-18.

6 Between 2005 and 2008, dozens of Uzbek refugees and asylum seekers who faced a grave risk of torture or ill-treatment were forcibly returned to Uzbekistan from Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Ukraine. Human Rights Watch, *Saving Its Secrets: Government Repression in Andijan*, p.42.



“Until the Very End”

Politically Motivated Imprisonment in Uzbekistan

The Uzbek government has arbitrarily imprisoned thousands of individuals on political or religious grounds to enforce its repressive rule since the early 1990s. The victims include human rights activists, journalists, political opposition activists, religious leaders and believers, cultural figures, artists, entrepreneurs, and others imprisoned for the peaceful exercise of their freedom of expression.

Based on more than 150 in-depth interviews and analysis of recently obtained court documents, *“Until the Very End”: Politically Motivated Imprisonment in Uzbekistan* profiles the cases of 34 of Uzbekistan’s most prominent individuals imprisoned on politically motivated charges. Those interviewed include 10 individuals previously imprisoned on such charges.

The prisoners whose cases this report documents have experienced a wide range of human rights violations, including denial of access to counsel, incommunicado detention, pretrial and post-conviction torture, abusive and prolonged solitary confinement, the denial of appropriate medical care, and the arbitrary denial of amnesty and extension of prison sentences. Human Rights Watch calls on the Uzbek government for their immediate and unconditional release.

Uzbekistan’s international partners, including the United States, the European Union and EU member states, and UN Human Rights Council, should convey clearly to Tashkent, both in public and in private, the urgent need for concrete human rights improvements, including the release of all those imprisoned on politically motivated charges.

(above) Individuals formerly imprisoned on politically motivated charges in Uzbekistan

(front cover) Individuals currently imprisoned on politically motivated charges in Uzbekistan