

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Uzbekistan: Amnesty International urges Uzbekistan to reconsider its rejection of recommendations to investigate mass killings in Andizhan and to release human rights defenders

In a statement on 20 March before the Human Rights Council adopted the Universal Periodic Review outcome on Uzbekistan. Amnesty International also welcomed Uzbekistan's stated support of recommendations by several states to establish a national independent mechanism to monitor all places of detention and to consider complaints. In the organization's view, such a mechanism would significantly contribute towards protecting individuals deprived of their liberty from torture or other ill-treatment, a longstanding concern of Amnesty International in Uzbekistan, and would comply with recommendations repeatedly made by several UN treaty bodies, as well as by the Special Rapporteur on Torture.

Amnesty International was dismayed, however, that Uzbekistan categorically rejected calls by several states to ensure that a thorough, impartial and independent international investigation into the Andizhan events of May 2005 is carried out. Hundreds of individuals, including women and children, were killed when security forces opened fire on mostly unarmed demonstrators gathered in the centre of Andizhan and as they fled. During the review Uzbekistan rejected as "unfounded" reports that excessive and disproportionate force had been used. Referring to visits by European Union experts in 2006 and 2007 related to these events, the government stated that it considered the issue closed. Amnesty International does not regard these visits as constituting an international investigation which should be urgently undertaken in accordance with Uzbekistan's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.¹

Amnesty International also urged Uzbekistan to reconsider its rejection of recommendations by several states to release all detained human rights defenders. According to information available to Amnesty International, at least 10 human rights defenders remain in prison and those released in 2008 were not freed unconditionally. As recently as February this year, another human rights defender was detained on charges which appear to be politically motivated. Amnesty International urges Uzbekistan to ensure that everyone, including human rights defenders, can peacefully exercise their right to freedom of expression in conformity with Uzbekistan's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Background

The 10th session of the UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Uzbekistan on Friday 20 March 2009. Prior to the adoption Amnesty International delivered an oral statement expressing the concerns outlined above.

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¹ As a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Uzbekistan is obliged, including under Article 2(3), to ensure an independent, impartial and thorough investigation into the events of May 2005. In its General Comment 31 of 29 March 2004, the Human Rights Committee noted that failure to do so "could of itself give rise to a separate breach of the Covenant" (CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.13).

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