

PUBLIC

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UA 324/07 Torture/health concern/possible prisoner of conscience

UZBEKISTAN Ikhtior Khamroev (m), aged 22, student

Ikhtior Khamroev, who has been in jail since September 2006, was reportedly severely beaten on 29 November. Sources inside the prison have told his father that Ikhtior had also received stab wounds to the abdomen, but was locked in a punishment cell rather than taken to hospital. He is believed to have been detained because of the activities of his father, a prominent human rights defender, and may have been beaten to punish his father for his recent anti-government statements.

He is the son of Bakhtior Khamroev, the head of the Dzhizzakh section of the independent non-registered Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan. He was detained in August 2006 on a reportedly fabricated charge of "hooliganism" following a street fight with other youths. His father has said he was provoked and acted in self-defence. He was sentenced to three years in prison the following month, and is now held in a prison camp in the Dzhizzakh Region village of Chikurgan. He was severely beaten by prison staff in December 2006 and refused appropriate medical treatment for his injuries and other health problems. However, following sustained international pressure his conditions of detention improved noticeably: he was no longer ill-treated, received medical treatment when necessary and was allowed regular visits by his family.

His family were hoping that Ikhtior might be released early under a December 2007 presidential amnesty, but when his mother visited him on 29 November he told her that his sentence had been extended by seven months for alleged "disciplinary offences". He feared the authorities would use this as a pretext to disqualify him from the amnesty.

Sources inside the prison camp told Bakhtior Khamroev when he visited on 1 December that during the night of 29 November Ikhtior had been taken by prison guards to a punishment cell where he was badly beaten, to force him to admit to further disciplinary offences, which would almost certainly bar him from early release. According to the same sources Ikhtior stabbed himself in the abdomen in protest. It is not clear how he would have had a knife. He was apparently refused appropriate medical treatment, and locked in a punishment cell. The prison director has refused to allow his parents to visit him, and has given them no details of where he is held or his medical condition.

Since Ikhtior has been in prison, Bakhtior Khamroev had been less outspoken in his criticism of the authorities' human rights record, so as not to worsen his son's treatment. However he did criticise them publicly at an international conference on human rights defenders in the Irish capital, Dublin, at the end of November, and so it is possible that Ikhtior was beaten to punish his father. Bakhtior Khamroev made his speech just days after the UN Committee against Torture concluded that torture and impunity remained routine in Uzbekistan and criticized the authorities for their harsh treatment of human rights defenders.

Bakhrom Khamroev has told human rights activists that the authorities have stepped up their surveillance of him and his family and that all his movements are closely monitored. .

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The situation for human rights defenders in Uzbekistan has deteriorated during 2007, and the authorities have further restricted their freedom of speech, assembly and movement in the run-up to the December presidential elections. In the first four months of 2007 two human rights defenders and an opposition political activist were sentenced to long prison terms on what appeared to be politically-motivated charges. Those

human rights activists not forced into exile and not in detention were routinely monitored by uniformed or plainclothes police, called in to their local police stations for questioning, placed under house arrest or otherwise prevented from attending meetings with foreign diplomats, or from taking part in peaceful demonstrations. Human rights defenders reported being threatened by members of the security forces for carrying out legitimate activities; several reported being beaten and detained by police or people they thought were working for the security services.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Russian, Uzbek, English or your own language:

- expressing concern at reports that Ikhtior Khamroev was severely beaten on 29 November and that the prison authorities have refused him the medical treatment he needs;
- urging the authorities to disclose Ikhtior Khamroev's whereabouts immediately;
- urging them to ensure that he receives all the medical treatment he requires and is allowed visits from his family;
- calling on the authorities to promptly investigate the allegations of ill-treatment and bring those responsible to justice.

APPEALS TO:

President

Islam KARIMOV

Presidential Residence, ul. Uzbekistanskaya, 43, g. Tashkent, UZBEKISTAN

Fax: +998 71 139 53 25,

Email: presidents_office@press-service.uz

Salutation: Dear President Karimov

Head of the Prison Service

Abdukarim SHODIEV

Ministry of Internal Affairs

UZBYM MVD Respubliki Uzbekistan, 25, Ferganskoye shosse, 700005 g. Tashkent, UZBEKISTAN

Fax: +998 71 133 89 34

Email: mvd@mvd.uz

info@mvd.uz

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Director of prison camp where Ikhtior Khamroev is held

Sobir MINGBAEV

KIN UYa 64/78, p Chimkurgan, Zafarzhan district, Dzhizzakh region, UZBEKISTAN

Salutation: Dear Director

Head of the Dzhizzakh Regional Department of Internal Affairs

Zhaloliddin AKBAEV

ul. Narimanova 30, 708000 g. Dzhizzakh. Dzhizzakh region, UZBEKISTAN

Fax: +998 72 226 03 02;

Salutation: Dear Zhaloliddin Akbaev

and to diplomatic representatives of Uzbekistan accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 16 January 2008.