

PUBLIC

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Forcible deportation/fear for safety

28 April 1999

TURKEY/UZBEKISTAN

Rustam Mamatkulov
Zeyniddin Askarov

There is grave concern for the safety of Rustam Mamatkulov and Zeyniddin Askarov, who were forcibly returned to Uzbekistan from Turkey on the night of 26 March 1999. Amnesty International believes that the two men are now detained incommunicado in the Uzbek capital, Tashkent, and are at risk of ill-treatment or torture, and unfair trial.

The two men, said to be supporters of the banned democratic opposition party *Erk*, had reportedly been detained in Turkey since the beginning of March at the request of the Uzbek authorities, who claim they were involved in a series of bomb explosions in Tashkent on 16 February. The Uzbek authorities have blamed the explosions on the exiled leader of *Erk*, Muhammad Salih, his supporters and "Islamic extremists".

The deportation was reportedly sanctioned by the Turkish Council of Ministers on 22 April, and went ahead despite a formal request from the European Court of Human Rights not to deport them, as it was feared that they would face grave violations of their human rights in Uzbekistan.

Rustam Mamatkulov is a businessman resident in Almaty, Kazakstan. He was reportedly detained by Turkish security forces on 3 March when he arrived in Istanbul on a flight from Almaty via Tehran, Iran. Bakirkoy Criminal Court ruled in favour of his extradition on 11 March.

Zeyniddin Askarov is believed to have worked in Turkey as a tourist guide for the past two years. He was detained in Istanbul by Turkish security forces around the beginning of March and held in Bayrampasa Prison until his deportation.

The forcible return to Uzbekistan of these two men violates Turkey's obligations under the Convention against Torture, which prohibits the return of a person to a country or territory where they may face serious human rights violations, and under the European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since the February bombings in Tashkent, in which at least 13 people died and more than 100 were injured, hundreds of supposed conspirators, including members and presumed members of independent Islamic congregations, members and supporters of the banned political opposition parties and movements and their families have been detained. The Uzbek authorities have blamed the bombings on violent foreign-trained Islamic groups operating in concert with Muhammad Salih. One of Muhammad Salih's brothers, Muhammad Bekzhon, has not been seen since he was forcibly returned to Uzbekistan by the Ukrainian authorities on 18 March (see UA 48/99, EUR 50/01/99, and follow-ups).

During an official visit to Uzbekistan in the middle of March, President Demirel of Turkey assured the Uzbek president that Uzbek anti-government forces would not find refuge in Turkey. "Islam Karimov's enemies are my enemies," he said, adding, "We support Uzbekistan in its fight against terrorism. We'll try to meet all the needs of Uzbekistan to fight terrorism."

RECOMMENDED ACTION: To the Turkish authorities: please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English, Turkish or your own language:

- expressing regret that Rustam Mamatkulov and Zeyniddin Askarov were forcibly deported despite a formal request from the European Court of Human Rights not to return them to Uzbekistan, where they face serious human rights violations;

- reminding the Turkish authorities of their obligations under international law.

To the Uzbek authorities: please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Russian, English or in your own language:

- urging the authorities to immediately disclose the whereabouts of Rustam Mamatkulov and Zeyniddin Askarov;
- seeking assurances that they will be protected from any form of ill-treatment and be allowed immediate access to family and legal representatives.

APPEALS TO:

Head of State
President Süleyman Demirel
Office of the President
Cumhur Ba_kanl____
06100 Ankara, Turkey
Telegrams: President Demirel, Ankara, Turkey
Telex: 42303 kosk tr
Faxes: +90 312 468 5026
Salutation: Your Excellency

Prime Minister
Mr Bülent Ecevit
Office of the Prime Minister
Ba_bakanl_k
06573 Ankara, Turkey
Telegrams: Prime Minister, Ankara, Turkey
Faxes: +90 312 417 0476
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

COPIES TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs
_smaail Cem
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
D_i_leri Bakanl____
06100 Ankara, Turkey
Telegrams: Foreign Minister, Ankara, Turkey
Faxes: +90 312 287 15 81
Salutation: Dear Minister

APPEALS TO:

President of Uzbekistan, Islam KARIMOV
700163 g. Tashkent, 43 pr. Uzbekistansky,
Rezidentsiya Prezidenta, Prezidentu Karimovu I.A.,
UZBEKISTAN
Telegrams: Prezidentu Karimovu, 700163 Tashkent, Uzbekistan
Faxes: +998 71 139 5525 or 139 5510
Salutation: Dear President Karimov

Chairman of the National Centre for Human Rights, Akmal SAIDOV
700008 g. Tashkent, 5/3 Mustakillik Maidoni,
Natsionalny tsentr po pravam cheloveka, Predsedatelyu SAIDOVU A.
UZBEKISTAN
Telegrams: Uzbekistan, 700008 g. Tashkent, Natsionalny tsentr po pravam cheloveka, predsedatelyu Saidovu
Fax: +998 71 139 13 56 or +998 71 39 45 16
e-mail: office@nchr.uz
Salutation: Dear Chairman

and to diplomatic representatives of Turkey and Uzbekistan accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 9 June 1999.