

PUBLIC

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**Further Information on UA 180/03 (EUR 62/005/2003, 20 June 2003) and follow-up (EUR 62/010/2003, 13 August 2003) - Fear for safety/fear of torture and ill-treatment**

**UZBEKISTAN**

**Ruslan Sharipov (m), journalist, aged 26**

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Ruslan Sharipov has been moved from prison to what amounts to house arrest.

On 13 March he was reportedly transferred to a detention centre in Tashkent region best described as an "open" prison (*koloniya-poseleniye*, a "penal colony settlement"). He has reportedly been allowed to live with a relative, who lives close by, so he is effectively under house arrest. He has to report daily to the prison authorities and must not undertake any public activities such as attending meetings or writing articles for publication. If he breaks these conditions he could be sent back to a stricter regime penal colony to serve the remainder of his sentence. Under a December 2003 presidential amnesty his sentence was reduced to three years, one month and 17 days. According to at least one official statement from the Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Affairs he could qualify for early release after he has served a third of his sentence, which would be on 11 June 2004.

Ruslan Sharipov, a correspondent for the Russian news agency PRIMA and Chairman of the unregistered human rights organization *Grazhdanskoe sodeystviye* (Civic Assistance), was arrested in May 2003. In August 2003 he was convicted on charges of homosexuality, "encouraging minors to commit antisocial behaviour" and having sex with minors. He was sentenced to five-and-a-half years' imprisonment. Consensual sex between men is punishable by up to three years' imprisonment in Uzbekistan, under Article 120 of the Criminal Code.

In September 2003 his sentence was reduced on appeal to four years' imprisonment. In October he was transferred to a penal colony. He insisted that the charges were fabricated because of his critical reporting and human rights work, and that the court had ignored forensic medical tests that exonerated him. He alleged that he was tortured into changing his plea to guilty, dismissing his lawyers and writing a suicide note. He said he was threatened with rape and suffocation, had a gas mask put over his head and the air supply turned off, and was injected with an unknown substance. There is not known to have been any thorough and impartial investigation into allegations that he confessed under torture.

**No further action is requested from the Urgent Action network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals. Amnesty International will continue to monitor Ruslan Sharipov's situation, and will take further action as necessary.**