

Uzbekistan Web action – WA 1103

“Justice only in heaven” – End the death penalty in Uzbekistan

Scores of prisoners are secretly executed each year in Uzbekistan by a corrupt and flawed justice system.

The parents of Allanazar Kurbanov, sentenced to death in August 2001, hope their son is still alive. “We want to find out the truth. We are getting contradictory signs from the authorities.... We’ll not give up to find out what happened,” said Allanazar Kurbanov’s father.

Summary

“They find justice only in heaven.”

The mother of a prisoner on death row in Uzbekistan, June 2003

Uzbekistan’s flawed criminal justice system provides fertile ground for executions due to judicial error or grossly unfair trials. Torture is systematic and ‘confessions’ extracted under torture are routinely used as evidence in trials. Corruption is an integral part of the investigation, trial and appeal in many death penalty cases.

Executions take place in secret in Uzbekistan and family members and friends are even denied the chance to say goodbye to the prisoner. In many cases family members do not know for months, sometimes even years, whether their relative has been executed and they are never told where they are buried.

Local advocates of the abolition of the death penalty believe that the bodies of executed prisoners are not returned in order to prevent relatives from finding marks of torture on their bodies. Many search for years in the hope of finding the grave.

“It is one of the worst things for me that I do not know where Dmitry is buried. If I knew I would at least have a place where I can go with my grief and where I can talk to him,”

Tamara Chikunova whose son was executed in secret in July 2000.

Further information on the cases of Abror Isayev, Nodirbek Karimov, Iskandar Khudoberganov and Evgeny Gugin

Photo caption:

The parents of Allanazar Kurbanov, sentenced to death in August 2001, hope their son is still alive.

Recommended Action

Call on the authorities in Uzbekistan to end this suffering and take immediate steps towards abolishing the death penalty.

Send a fax or letter in English, Russian, Uzbek or your own language to the authorities of Uzbekistan. You may cut and paste the letter below or use it as a guide to compose your own letter.

Sample letter

Dear

I am deeply concerned that the application of the death penalty in Uzbekistan is surrounded by massive human rights violations including torture, unfair trials, and corruption, increasing the possibility of judicial error.

I urge you to save the lives of Abror Isayev, Nodirbek Karimov, Iskandar Khudoberganov, Evgeny Gugnin and all other death row prisoners in Uzbekistan. There are strong indications that the four men were tortured and ill-treated in detention.

I am also shocked about the secrecy that surrounds the application of the death penalty in Uzbekistan. Families are not informed of the date of the execution in advance and have no chance to say good-bye to their loved ones; they are not allowed to bury their relative and are not even told the location of their graves. This secrecy unnecessarily increases the suffering and subjects the prisoners' family and friends to cruel and inhuman treatment.

I welcome the reversal of death sentences to prison terms in at least 11 cases in recent years. However, I believe that this is not enough. It is high time to take more fundamental measures. I urge you to respond to this historical challenge and take immediate steps towards abolition by promptly imposing a moratorium on all death sentences and executions.

I would greatly appreciate if you addressed these issues as a matter of urgency.

Yours sincerely,

Target contact details

President Islam Karimov:

Respublika Uzbekistan
700163 g. Tashkent; ul. Uzbekistanskaya, 43
Rezidentsiya prezidenta
Prezidentu Respubliki Uzbekistán
KARIMOVU I.A.
UZBEKISTAN

Salutation: Dear President,

Foreign Minister Sadik Safoyev:

Respublika Uzbekistan
700029 g. Tashkent
pl. Mustakillik, 5
Ministerstvo inostrannykh del Respubliki Uzbekistán
Ministru SAFOYEVU S.S.
UZBEKISTAN
Fax: +998 - 71 - 139 15 17

Salutation: Dear Minister;

Related documents

- Report "*Justice only in heaven*" – the death penalty in Uzbekistan (AI Index: EUR 62/011/2003).
- Summary of the report, entitled "*Uzbekistan: Unfair trials and secret executions*" (AI Index: EUR 62/012/2003).
- Press release *Uzbekistan: Secret executions in a corrupt and flawed justice system* (EUR 62/017/2003)

Background information page:

The death penalty in Uzbekistan - Cases

Abror Isayev, Nodirbek Karimov, Iskandar Khudoberganov and Evgeny Gugin could be executed at any time.

Death row prisoners Abror Isayev and Nodirbek Karimov

Abror Isayev and Nodirbek Karimov were sentenced to death for murder in December 2002. Abror Isayev had surrendered himself to the police as a potential witness, but was reportedly beaten for a week and coerced into confessing to the crime. His co-defendant Nodirbek Karimov, who admitted involvement in the killing, also alleged that he had been subjected to ill-treatment in pre-trial detention. Abror Isayev reportedly became mentally ill while on death row. His mother visited him in May and told Amnesty International:

“I knocked at the glass screen between us and dangled a thread in front of his eyes, but his eyes did not follow. I said ‘It is mama’, but he did not recognize me. He was humming and had his eyes fixed on the ceiling.”

His mother repeatedly pressed for treatment but a prison doctor said her son was feigning illness. In June a Ministry of Interior official told her that he was receiving medical treatment and was in satisfactory health. No independent medical examination has been carried out into his state of health.

Photo caption:

Abror Isayev © Private

Death row prisoner Iskandar Khudoberganov

In November 2002 Tashkent City Court sentenced Iskandar Khudoberganov to death. Two co-defendants -- Bekzod Kasymbekov and Nosirkhon Khakimov -- were sentenced to prison terms of between six and 16 years. The men had been put on trial on serious “anti-state” charges. Iskandar Khudoberganov was additionally charged with “terrorism” and “premeditated, aggravated murder”, and accused of having trained in military camps in Chechnya and Tajikistan with the aim of overthrowing the Uzbek government by violent means. The trial was believed to be grossly unfair. Iskandar Khudoberganov’s lawyers, for example, were denied access to him for at least two months. There were strong indications that the convictions were largely based on evidence extracted under torture. Although the three men reported the torture in court, no investigation into the allegations was opened.

Photo caption:

Iskandar Khudoberganov © Private

Death row prisoner Evgeny Gugin

On 28 October 2002, Tashkent City Court sentenced Evgeny Gugin and his co-defendant Ilkhom Karimov from the town of Kokand in Ferghana valley to death. They were accused of having robbed and killed a woman and a man at their flat in the capital Tashkent in April 2002. A co-defendant was sentenced to 20 years’ imprisonment in a strict regime colony. Following a court decision, Ilkhom Karimov’s death sentence was reversed in February or March 2003. The courts have turned down all appeals against Evgeny Gugin’s death sentence. Tamara Chikunova, chair of the human rights organization Mothers against the Death Penalty and Torture, told Amnesty International: “In pre-trial detention Gugin and Karimov were severely beaten by law enforcement officers.” She added: “Gugin only confessed because the officers threatened to kill his mother and younger brother.”

Photo caption:

Evgeny Gugin. © Private