



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL UZBEKISTAN: APPEAL CASE

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Azam Farmonov and Alisher Karamatov: human rights defenders continue to serve long prison sentences amid claims that they are being tortured

Amnesty International calls for immediate and unconditional release of prisoners of conscience Azam Farmonov and Alisher Karamatov, members of the independent Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan (HRSU). They continue to serve long sentences having been convicted after an unfair trial in June 2006; according to their relatives, the two men are being subjected to torture or other ill-treatment in prison.

Azam Farmonov is the head of the HRSU Sirdaria regional branch and the son-in-law of Talib Yakubov, the head of HRSU, who had to leave Uzbekistan in August 2006 due to constant threats to his life. Alisher Karamatov is the head of the HRSU Mirzaabad district branch. The two men were first detained in 29 April 2006 as they defended the rights of local farmers who had accused some district farming officials of malpractice, extortion and corruption. They were kept incommunicado for at least a week and alleged being subjected to beatings and torture during that time, in order to force them to sign confessions. The two men were charged with extortion on 16 May 2006, subjected to an unfair trial where they had neither a defence lawyer nor other legal representative and then sentenced to nine years' imprisonment.

Azam Farmonov is serving his sentence in Yaslik prison camp. During a family visit in November 2007, Azam Farmonov told his wife that over the last six months he had been tortured, beaten and humiliated by prison guards. He had twice been put in punitive solitary confinement: from 23 May to 19 June and from 10 to 20 October. He added that when he was in the punishment cell in May he was beaten every day on his feet and his back with a club. As a result he was not able to move for 10 days. He described how he was handcuffed to the radiator for two days and severely beaten by five guards until he lost consciousness during his second time in the punishment cell. As a result, he had trouble walking and had discharge from his ears. His relatives believed that he was subjected to torture in order to make him give up his human rights activities, denounce Talib Yakubov and divorce his wife.

When Azam Farmonov's wife visited him in Yaslik in February 2008, he told her that he had been placed in solitary confinement from 8 to 30 January; first in a punishment cell for 15 days and then seven days in quarantine. During all this time he had been handcuffed. The temperatures during this period of time fell to below minus 30 centigrade. He also told her that he was beaten and ill-treated by prison staff in the office of the prison director on 16 February when he refused to sign a statement saying that he had infringed prison rules and therefore did not qualify for a presidential amnesty. He said that in the end he signed the statement because of the ill-treatment.

Alisher Karamatov is serving his sentence in Karshi prison camp. Alisher Karamatov's wife who visited her husband in Karshi at the end of 2007, reported that she barely recognized him as he had lost nearly half of his weight: before his arrest he was a tall and athletic person weighing more than 90 kg, compared to 54 kg in detention. Alisher Karamatov complained of the endless torture and humiliation that he had been subjected to. He also reported that

sanitary and hygienic conditions were very poor. Alisher Karamatov's wife could clearly see that he had lice.

Background Information

The situation for human rights defenders and independent journalists has continued to deteriorate and the authorities further restricted their freedom of speech, assembly and movement in the run-up to the December 2007 Presidential elections. At the beginning of February 2008 the authorities unexpectedly released several human rights defenders who had not been expected to have qualified for release under a December 2007 amnesty, including some high-profile human rights defenders like Saidzhakhon Zainabidinov. Despite these releases at least a dozen human rights defenders continued to serve long prison terms in cruel, inhuman and degrading conditions having been convicted after unfair trials. Several of them were reportedly tortured or otherwise ill-treated in detention. Those human rights activists and journalists not forced into exile and not in detention were routinely monitored by uniformed or plain-clothes law enforcement officers; human rights defenders were called in for questioning to their local police stations, placed under house arrest or otherwise prevented from attending meetings with foreign diplomats or delegations or from taking part in peaceful demonstrations. Human rights defenders and journalists continued to report being threatened by members of the security services for carrying out legitimate activities. Several reported being beaten by law enforcement officers or people they suspected working for the security services. Relatives reported being threatened and harassed by security forces; some were detained and jailed in order to put pressure on human rights defenders.

Letter-writing recommendations:

Please send courteous letters in Uzbek, Russian, English, or your own language stating the following:

- urging them to release Azam Farmonov and Alisher Karamatov immediately
- expressing concern that Azam Farmonov and Alisher Karamatov were sentenced to nine years' imprisonment after a trial that fell short of international fair trial standards, in contravention of Uzbekistan's international obligations, as a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
- expressing concern over reports that they continue to be tortured or otherwise ill-treated in prison
- urging the authorities to launch a prompt, impartial and independent investigation into allegations of torture and ill-treatment
- urging the authorities to ensure that everyone, including human rights defenders, can peacefully exercise their right to freedom of expression in conformity with Article 19 of the ICCPR to which Uzbekistan is a State Party

Appeals to:

Minister of Internal Affairs Bahodir MATLIUBOV

Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del RU; ul. Junus Rajabiy 1; Tashkent 700029; UZBEKISTAN

Fax: + 998 71 233 89 34; **Email:** mvd@mvd.uz, info@mvd.uz, secretariat@mvd.uz

Salutation: Dear Minister Matliubov

Prosecutor General Rashidzhon KODIROV

Prokuratura Respubliki Uzbekistan; ul. Gulyamova 66; Tashkent 700047; UZBEKISTAN

Fax: + 998 71 233 39 17/ 133 73 68; **Email:** prokuratura@lawyer.com

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

Head of the Directorate of Execution of Sentences Abdukarim SHODIEV

GUIN MVD Respubliki Uzbekistan; Ferganskoye shosse 25; Tashkent 700005; UZBEKISTAN

Fax: +998 71 191 6835; **Email:** guin@mvd.uz

Salutation: Dear Mr. Shodiev

Copies to: diplomatic representatives of Uzbekistan in your own country.