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Anti-death penalty activists speak out

"From the day we learned that the police were looking for Iskandar, the life of our whole family was turned upside down."

Dilobar Khudoberganova, whose brother Iskandar Khudoberganov is on death row

Two leading Uzbekistani campaigners against the death penalty will offer a unique insight into the brutal reality behind this most inhuman of practices during a two-and-a-half-month tour of European and Canadian cities.

Tamara Chikunova and Dilobar Khudoberganova are two women whose loved ones were sentenced to death in Uzbekistan, one of only two countries in the former Soviet Union still carrying out executions. The other country is Belarus.

From 23 September to 5 December, the two women will be touring various cities to recount their personal experiences and explain why their government should abolish capital punishment.

They will tell how relatives have been held hostage by the police or harassed and ill-treated. Some are even tortured to disclose a suspect's whereabouts or as a means of persuading suspects to hand themselves in to the police, to sign a "confession" or to incriminate others. They will also describe how police have extorted bribes from them, how death sentences are passed after unfair trials, how executions and burials are carried out in secrecy and how relatives are denied a last farewell with their loved ones and the solace of visiting their graves.

Journalists are welcome to interview Tamara Chikunova and Dilobar Khudoberganova when they visit the following cities:

Rome - Padova - Asolo - Venice - 23 - 28 September

Milan - Turin - Rome - Naples - Florence - Rome - 12 November - 5 December

(Contact: Amnesty International Italy +39 06 44 90 224; press@amnesty.it)

Warsaw (Dilobar Khudoberganova only) 5 - 8 October (Contact Amnesty International Poland +48 22 828 56 77 mirella.p@amnesty.org.pl)

Montreal (Tamara Chikunova only) 5 - 10 October (Contact: Amnesty International Canada +1- 514 766 9766; Ext 230 aste-marie@amnistie.qc.ca)

Amsterdam (Dilobar Khudoberganova only) 9 -11 October (Contact: Amnesty International Netherlands +31 20 77 33 667; r.bosgraaf@amnesty.nl)

London - 12 - 20 October (Contact: Amnesty International UK +44 207 814 6238; neil.durkin@amnesty.org.uk)

Stockholm - 20 - 27 October (Contact: Amnesty International Sweden +46 8 729 0220;

elisabeth.lofgren@amnesty.se)

Paris - 27 October - 2 November (Contact: Amnesty International France +33 1 53 38 65 77/6541; spresse@amnesty.asso.fr)

Berlin - 2 - 12 November (Contact: Amnesty International Germany +49 30 420248-306; presse@amnesty.de)

Background

Tamara Chikunova is the founder and Chair of the non-governmental organization "Mothers against the Death Penalty and Torture", based in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. In 1999, Tamara's son, Dmitry Chikunov, was accused of murder and sentenced to death. He was executed in 2000. Tamara Chikunova has never been told where her son was buried. She has faced harassment and intimidation when defending the rights of her son, for example by approaching the international community with information about his treatment in detention, including serious allegations of torture, as well as for her subsequent anti-death penalty activities. The authorities have exerted psychological pressure on her relatives to force Tamara Chikunova to give up her human rights work. Police repeatedly visited her 76-year-old mother who is confined to her bed and warned her that "*things would end up very bad for her daughter*" if she did not "*shut up*". Tamara Chikunova reported that she frequently received anonymous phone calls at night that she believes are intended to induce fear in order to silence her.

(See: Uzbekistan: Anti-death penalty speakers' tour, Tamara Chikunova - profile: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engneur620212004>)

Dilobar Khudoberganova's brother Iskandar Khudoberganov was detained in Tajikistan and handed over to Uzbek law enforcement officers on 5 February 2002 on suspicion of involvement in bomb explosions in Tashkent in February 1999. Iskandar Khudoberganov was sentenced to death on 28 November 2002 on charges including "terrorism" in a trial characterized by a diplomat who monitored it as blatantly unfair. Dilobar Khudoberganova's family was harassed by the police to force them to disclose the whereabouts of Iskandar - her father and brother were reportedly severely beaten in the police headquarters. Dilobar Khudoberganova was sacked from her job with the state radio and is still unable to find employment in a state-run institution. The stress of constant visits by heavily armed police officers has had a detrimental effect on the health of the children in the Khudoberganov family.

(See: Uzbekistan: Anti-death penalty speakers' tour, Dilobar Khudoberganova - profile: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engneur620222004>)

Both Tamara Chikunova and Dilobar Khudoberganova have received death threats.

On 4 October, Amnesty International will launch its report *Belarus and Uzbekistan: the last executioners - The trend towards abolition in the former Soviet space* and an accompanying campaign as part of the organization's work towards full abolition of the death penalty in Europe and Central Asia.

Public Document

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