

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/Fear of torture and ill-treatment

UZBEKISTAN

Ruslan Sharipov (m), journalist

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of journalist and human rights activist Ruslan Sharipov, who has been detained by police in the capital Tashkent since 26 May 2003. He is at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Ruslan Sharipov was detained by police on 26 May and taken to the local department of internal affairs in Tashkent. He was first charged with homosexuality (Article 120 of the Uzbek Criminal Code). Local human rights activists reportedly protested immediately against his detention under an article which violates international human rights standards. According to reports it was only on the following day that Ruslan Sharipov was charged under Article 127 (encouraging minors to commit antisocial behaviour) and Article 128 (having sexual relations with minors) of the Uzbek Criminal Code. Police interrogating him reportedly confronted him about several of his articles he has written on the subject of human rights violations in Uzbekistan, shouting at him and threatening him with rape and suffocation. Ruslan Sharipov also claims that he has been beaten by police officers.

Ruslan Sharipov has published a number of articles about harassment of human rights activists and torture and ill-treatment by Uzbek law enforcement agencies. He has worked alongside several international human rights organizations. In 2001 and 2002, he was questioned by members of the Uzbek National Secret Service about his journalistic activities. He was detained in August 2001 and accused of membership of a terrorist organization. Ruslan Sharipov's friends and relatives have also been questioned about him, and in October 2001, the Uzbek National Security Service warned another journalist not to cooperate with him any longer.

Other members of the Uzbek human rights community fear that Ruslan Sharipov will be subjected to further ill-treatment and torture in detention, by both law enforcement officials and other prisoners because of his outspoken criticisms of the authorities and also because he is openly gay. Amnesty International is therefore concerned that a trial against him might not follow international standards of fair trial.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

According to Article 120 of the 1995 Uzbek Criminal Code "the satisfaction of a sexual urge by a man with a man without violence" is punishable by up to three years' imprisonment. This article has apparently not been used in the last years.

Following his visit to Uzbekistan in late 2002 the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture stated that torture is systematic in the country. Amnesty International and other human rights organizations have gathered information that indicates that torture is widespread in Uzbekistan.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Russian or Uzbek or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of journalist and human rights activist Ruslan Sharipov, who was detained in Tashkent on 26 May;
- urging the authorities to guarantee that Ruslan Sharipov is not tortured or ill-treated, either by law enforcement officials or by other detainees;

- reminding the government of their commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 5: "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment";
- expressing concern that his detention may be politically motivated;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee Ruslan Sharipov's right to a trial in which international standards of fair trial are respected.

APPEALS TO:

General Procurator of Uzbekistan

Rashidjon Hamidovich KODIROV
Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Uzbekistan
ul. Yahyo Gulomov 66
Tashkent
70000
Republic of Uzbekistan

Telegram: Prosecutor General's Office, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

E-mail: prokuratura@lawyer.com

Fax: + 998 71 1333917/ 133 73 68

Salutation: Dear Procurator General

Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Zakirzan Almatovich Almatov
Ministry of Internal Affairs
ul Novruz 1
Tashkent
700029
Republic of Uzbekistan

Telegram: Minister of Internal Affairs, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Fax: + 998 71 133 89 34

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights

Sayora Rashidova
Parliamentary Commission for Human Rights
ul.Xalqlar Do'stligi 1
Tashkent
700035
Republic of Uzbekistan

Fax: + 998 71 139 85 55

E-mail: office@ombudsman.gov.uz

and to diplomatic representatives of Uzbekistan accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 August 2003.