

PUBLIC

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17 March 2005

UA 66/05 Health concern/ fear of torture or ill-treatment/ incommunicado detention

UZBEKISTAN Rahima Akhmadalievna (f), aged 43

Rahima Akhmadalievna is being held incommunicado without charge at an unconfirmed location, and is at risk of torture or ill-treatment. She is reportedly being denied access to her regular medication for a heart condition. Her health is at risk if she does not receive immediate access to medical care.

At 5.30am on 8 March, officers from the National Security Service (SNB) forced their way into Rahima Akhmadalievna's home in Tashkent and detained her. According to her oldest daughter, Odina Maksudova, the officers gave no reason for her mother's detention and did not have a warrant for her arrest. The SNB officers reportedly refused to disclose where they were taking Rahima Akhmadalievna, but she is believed to be held either in a basement cell at the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) or at the SNB detention centre, both in Tashkent. Her family – including her three youngest children, aged 10, six and three - have not been allowed to see their mother despite repeated requests to the authorities.

Rahima Akhmadalievna's family say that she is in poor health as a result of previous ill-treatment by the security forces. She was detained in 2001 by MVD officers, who questioned her about the whereabouts of her husband Ruhiddin Fahrudinov, an independent *imam* (Muslim religious leader) who fled the country to escape arrest by the authorities in 1998 (see UA 77/01, EUR 62/004/2001, 30 March 2001). Rahima Akhmadalievna was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment on 21 September 2001 for 'undermining the constitutional order of Uzbekistan', but Amnesty International believes that she may have been imprisoned solely as a punishment for refusing to disclose her husband's whereabouts. Her ill-treatment in detention allegedly included being deprived of sleep, being insulted and threatened, and having her *hijab* (a headscarf worn by some Muslim women) ripped off her head. In pre-trial detention, she was also denied access to her medication for her heart condition.

Rahima Akhmadalievna was released from prison on 17 January 2004 under the terms of a December 2003 Presidential amnesty, but since then she and Odina Maksudova have been repeatedly detained for questioning by MVD officers in connection with attacks on police checkpoints in Tashkent and the city of Bukhara between 28 March and 1 April 2004. Rahima Akhmadalievna claims that MVD officers threatened Odina Maksudova and her 10-year-old sister with rape, that they had shouted abuse at her and her daughter and had accused them and Rahima Akhmadalievna's husband of having close links with the alleged organizers of the attacks. They allegedly threatened to send Rahima Akhmadalievna back to prison. In April 2004 Rahima Akhmadalievna complained about her repeated detentions in an open letter to President Islam Karimov.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A series of explosions and attacks on police checkpoints in Tashkent and the city of Bukhara took place between 28 March and 1 April 2004. Uzbek authorities blamed the violence, which left more than 40 people dead, on "Islamic extremists" whom they accused of intending to destabilize the country. Human rights organizations across the country reported mass arrests of men and women said to be either devout Muslims or their relatives. Scores of men and dozens of women, all accused of "terrorism"-related offences, were sentenced after unfair trials to long prison terms for their alleged participation in the violence.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Rahima Akhmadalievna, who has been detained incommunicado at an unconfirmed location since 8 March;

- expressing concern that she is reportedly being denied access to the medication she needs;
- calling on the authorities to make her whereabouts public and grant her immediate access to medical treatment, to her family, and to lawyers of her choosing;
- calling for guarantees that she will not be ill-treated or tortured in detention;
- urging the authorities to charge her with a recognizably criminal offence or else release her immediately;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into Rahima Akhmadalieva's claims that she and her daughter Odina Maksudova have been repeatedly arbitrarily detained and threatened by officers from the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), after attacks on police checkpoints in Tashkent and the city of Bukhara between 28 March and 1 April 2004.

APPEALS TO: (Please note that it can be difficult getting through to fax numbers in Uzbekistan. If a voice answers, repeat 'fax' until you hear the signal; otherwise leave your fax machine on auto-redial if possible. Fax machines may be switched off outside office hours – 5 hours ahead of GMT):

President of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Respublika Uzbekistan; 700163 g. Tashkent; ul. Uzbekistanskaya, 43; Rezidentsia prezidenta; Prezidentu KARIMOVU I.A.

Fax: +998 71 139 15 17 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Please write for the attention of President Karimov at the top of your fax)

Email: presidents_office@press-service.uz

Salutation: Dear President Karimov

General Procurator of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Respublika Uzbekistan; 700047 g. Tashkent; ul. Gulyamova, 66; Prokuratura Respubliki Uzbekistan; Generalnomu prokuroru KODIROVU R. Kh.

Fax: + 998 711 33 39 17/ 33 73 68

Email: prokuratura@lawyer.com

Salutation: Dear Procurator General

COPIES TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Elior Ghaniev

Respublika Uzbekistan; 700029 g. Tashkent; ul. Uzbekistanskaya 9; Ministerstvo inostrannykh del; Ministru GHANIEVU E.

Fax: +998 71 139 15 17

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Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights

Respublika Uzbekistan; 700035 g. Tashkent; Upolnomochennoy po pravam cheloveka RASHIDOVOY S.

Fax: +998 71 139 85 55

Email: 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 28 April 2005.