

PUBLIC

AI Index: EUR 62/012/2005

25 May 2005

UA 138/05

Fear of torture or ill-treatment/ Prisoner of conscience

UZBEKISTAN

Saidzhakhon Zainabidinov (m), human rights defender

Human rights defender Saidzhakhon Zainabidinov was reportedly arbitrarily detained by law enforcement officers on 21 May. He is believed to be held in police custody in the city of Andizhan, eastern Uzbekistan, and is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment. His arrest is apparently linked to his role in monitoring recent events in Andizhan, in which hundreds of people were killed. Amnesty International believes him to be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for carrying out his peaceful and legitimate human rights work.

Saidzhakhon Zainabidinov, the chairperson of the Andizhan independent human rights group *Apelliatsia* (Appeal), was arrested on 21 May. He was reportedly held incommunicado for two days before being permitted to telephone a relative on 23 May. A lawyer who visited his family on 23 May confirmed that Saidzhakhon Zainabidinov is being held in police custody in the Andizhan Regional Department of Internal Affairs.

Saidzhakhon Zainabidinov was monitoring the protests in Andizhan which escalated on 12-13 May and resulted in government troops allegedly opening fire indiscriminately into the crowd killing and wounding many people, mainly unarmed civilians (see UA 130/05, EUR 62/011/2005, 19 May 2005). Government officials have stated that 170 people were killed. However, unofficial sources have estimated the death toll to be at least 500. International media coverage has cited Saidzhakhon Zainabidinov's account of these events, providing a stark contrast to the official account provided by the Uzbekistani authorities.

The arrest of Saidzhakhon Zainabidinov appears to confirm fears that human rights defenders who monitored the apparent indiscriminate and excessive use of force by government troops in Andizhan are being detained for carrying out their legitimate and peaceful work. This is an apparent attempt to prevent them from gathering and disseminating factual information on the identity and the numbers of those killed.

Saidzhakhon Zainabidinov had monitored the trial of 23 local businessmen charged under various articles of the Uzbekistani Criminal Code in connection with their involvement with *Akramia*, a local Islamic movement. It appears that it was the ongoing trial of the businessmen which triggered the demonstrations in Andizhan. The Uzbekistani authorities have accused members and supporters of *Akramia* of attempting to organize the protests in Andizhan with a view to establishing an Islamic state in Uzbekistan. They have also linked the movement to the banned *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* opposition party, which they categorize as a "terrorist" organization. The 23 men deny being linked to any banned Islamic groups.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Saidzhakhon Zainabidinov and calling for guarantees that he will not be tortured or ill-treated in detention;
- stating that Amnesty International considers Saidzhakhon Zainabidinov to be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for carrying out his peaceful and legitimate human rights work, and calling for his immediate release;
- urging the Uzbekistani authorities to ensure that Saidzhakhon Zainabidinov is given access to a lawyer of his choice and to his relatives and that he receives the necessary medical attention;
- reminding the authorities of the right of human rights defenders to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights and

Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

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

Islam A. KARIMOV,
Rezidentsia prezidenta; ul. Uzbekistanskaia, 43; Tashkent 700163; UZBEKISTAN
Fax: + 998 71 139 53 25
Email: presidents_office@press-service.uz
Salutation: Dear President Karimov

Minister of Internal Affairs

Zakirzhan ALMATOV
Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del RU, ul. Novruz, 1; Tashkent 700029; UZBEKISTAN
Fax: + 998 71 133 89 34
Salutation: Dear Minister Almatov

General Procurator of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Rashidzhon KODIROV
Prokuratura Respubliki Uzbekistan, ul. Gulyamova, 66, 700047 g. Tashkent, UZBEKISTAN
Fax: + 998 71 133 39 17/ 133 73 68
E-mail: prokuratura@lawyer.com
Salutation: Dear Procurator General

COPIES TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Elior GANIEV, Ministerstvo inostrannykh del RU; pl. Mustakillik, 5; Tashkent 700029; UZBEKISTAN
Fax: + 998 71 139 15 17
Email: letter@mfa.uz or rnews@mfa.uz
Salutation: Dear Minister Ganiev

Head of the National Centre for Human Rights,

Akmal Saidov, Natsionalny tsentr po pravam cheloveka, 5/3, Mustakillik Maidoni, Tashkent 700029, UZBEKISTAN
Fax: +998 71 139 13 56
Email: office@nchr.uz
Salutation: Dear Senator Saidov

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 6 July 2005.