

PUBLIC

AI Index: EUR 62/011/2004

UA 192/04 **Imminent Execution**

04 June 2004

UZBEKISTAN **Azizbek Karimov (m), aged 25**

Azizbek Karimov is believed to be in imminent danger of execution.

In February 2004 he was sentenced to death by the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan on a number of charges including "terrorism" and involvement in a religious extremist organization. He was accused of serious crimes including involvement in a bomb attack on a large market in Bishkek in the neighbouring Republic of Kyrgyzstan in December 2002, and an attack on a bank in the Kyrgyz town of Osh in May 2003, that together left a total of eight people dead and dozens injured.

Azizbek Karimov was reportedly beaten during his arrest in May 2003, and was taken unconscious from his home in the Uzbek town of Andizhan. His family were reportedly not allowed to see him for over six months and there are allegations that he was tortured and ill-treated while kept in the detention facilities of the National Service in Tashkent. His mother told Amnesty International that during a court hearing somebody suddenly stood up and poured acetic acid over him, causing Azizbek Karimov to be hospitalized. The person responsible for the acid attack was reportedly never punished.

On 3 June 2004 the United Nations Human Rights Committee (HRC) urged the authorities of Uzbekistan to stay his execution, following allegations that his arrest and sentencing violated key principles of international law. Uzbekistan has in the past repeatedly neglected similar interventions and has executed at least 11 men on whose behalf the HRC had intervened.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In September 2001, President Karimov publicly stated that around 100 people were executed in Uzbekistan each year. As the death penalty is treated as a secret in Uzbekistan, comprehensive official information on the numbers of sentences passed and executions carried out is not publicly available.

The death penalty has played an important role in the clampdown on "religious extremism" in the country. The authorities have, for years, regarded "Islamist fundamentalism" as the key threat to the country's security. Since 1998 at least 39 (possibly many more) death sentences have been passed on men who were accused of having committed capital crimes and labelled "religious extremists". Concern has been voiced that the defendants' right to be presumed innocent until guilt is proved beyond a reasonable doubt has been violated.

Following his visit to Uzbekistan in November and December 2002, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture concluded that "torture or similar ill-treatment is systematic" in Uzbekistan. In his February 2003 report, he noted that "the abolition of the death penalty would be a positive step towards respect for the prohibition of torture and other forms of ill-treatment."

In recent years the Uzbek authorities have arrested a number of members of Azizbek Karimov's family. His father and uncle, sentenced to long-term imprisonment in 1999 for "religious extremism", both died in a prison colony, reportedly as a result of torture.

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

- urging the President to commute Azizbek Karimov's death sentence and all other death sentences that come before him;
- urging the authorities to abide by the 3 June 2004 request by the United Nations Human Rights Committee to stay Azizbek Karimov's execution while his case is being considered, and thereby honour Uzbekistan's obligation as a party to the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- expressing concern about allegations that Azizbek Karimov was tortured and ill-treated in pre-trial detention and urging the authorities to open an impartial and thorough investigation into these allegations;
- expressing sympathy for the victims of crime and their families, but pointing out that the death penalty has never been shown to deter crime more effectively than other punishments, and is brutalizing to all those involved in its application.

APPEALS TO:

President of Uzbekistan

Islam Abduganiyevich KARIMOV
Respublika Uzbekistan;
700163 g. Tashkent;
ul. Uzbekistanskaya, 43;
Rezidentsia prezidenta;
Prezidentu RU;
KARIMOVU I.A.,
UZBEKISTAN

Telegram: Prezidentu Karimovu, 700163 Tashkent, Uzbekistan
Salutation: Dear President Karimov

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Sodiq Solihovich SAFOYEV
Respublika Uzbekistan;
700029 g. Tashkent;
pl. Mustakillik, 5;
Ministerstvo inostrannykh del RU;
Ministru Safoyevu, S.S.,
UZBEKISTAN

Telegram: Foreign Affairs Minister, 700029, Tashkent, Uzbekistan
Fax: + 998 71 139 15 17
Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

General Procurator of the Republic of Uzbekistan

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

Telegram: General Procurator of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 700047, Tashkent, Uzbekistan
Fax: + 998 71 133 39 17
Salutation: Dear Procurator General

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 16 July 2004.