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Uzbekistan: Two more executions despite UN intervention

Amnesty International today expressed outrage at the reported execution of two men by the Uzbekistani authorities despite calls for a stay of execution from the United Nations Human Rights Committee.

Amnesty International has learnt from unofficial sources that Azizbek Karimov and Yusuf Zhumayev were executed in secret on 10 August.

Such executions would contravene the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, under which the UN Committee had requested the stays of execution while considering allegations from the two men that their trials were unfair and that they were tortured and ill-treated in pre-trial detention.

"If confirmed, the executions represent yet another example of the flagrant disregard for the rule of law, international obligations and human rights that characterises Uzbekistan's flawed criminal justice system. Use of the death penalty in a country where torture is systematic and corruption unchecked is particularly irresponsible and unjustifiable," Amnesty International said.

The organisation has made repeated public appeals urging the Uzbekistani authorities not to execute the men and to instigate a prompt and impartial investigation into the allegations of torture including beatings and the use of electric shocks.

Before news of the latest executions, Amnesty International had already documented 12 cases in which death row prisoners were executed despite interventions by the Human Rights Committee.

Amnesty International calls on the government of Uzbekistan to impose an immediate moratorium on all death sentences and executions with a view to a total abolition of the death penalty in Uzbekistan and to commute the death sentences of all prisoners currently on death row to terms of imprisonment.

Background

Yusuf Zhumayev was sentenced to death in April 2003, convicted of murdering his brother's wife and his niece and nephew in January that year. He has consistently maintained his innocence and alleged during his trial that he was tortured by police to force him to sign a "confession".

Azizbek Karimov was sentenced to death on 16 February 2004 on charges including "terrorism" and participating in a religious extremist organization. It was also alleged that he was tortured and ill-treated while in pre-trial detention.

Amnesty International issued Urgent Actions on behalf of Azizbek Karimov and Yusuf Zhumayev on 4 June and 30 July 2004 respectively.

In September 2001, President Islam Karimov publicly stated that around 100 people are executed in the Uzbekistan each year. As the death penalty is treated as a secret in Uzbekistan, no official figures are publicly available, but local human rights groups believe up to 200 people are executed each year.

In Uzbekistan the relatives of death row prisoners and the prisoners themselves are not informed of the date of the execution in advance. Relatives often wait for months or years to receive confirmation that their relative has been executed.

As a party to the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Uzbekistan has recognized the competence of the Human Rights Committee to consider communications from individuals subject to Uzbekistani jurisdiction who claim to be victims of violations of rights set out in the Covenant. Rule 86 of the Committee's Rules of Procedure authorizes the Committee to request a stay of execution in order to avoid irreparable damage to the victim of the alleged violation pending the Committee's decision on the victim's communication.

In July 2003, the acting UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, publicly urged the authorities of Uzbekistan "not to carry out the execution of detainees who have appealed their convictions to the United Nations Human Rights Committee". Later that month the Human Rights Committee reminded the authorities of Uzbekistan, "it amounts to a grave breach of the Optional Protocol to execute an individual whose case is pending before the Committee".

The (UN) Special Rapporteur on torture has concluded "torture or similar ill-treatment is systematic" in Uzbekistan.

Public Document

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