

# URGENT ACTION

## INDEPENDENT JOURNALIST MUST BE IMMEDIATELY RELEASED

**On 10 January, the family of Uzbekistani independent journalist Bobomurod Abdullayev, held since 27 September 2017 in an Uzbekistani National Security Service (SNB) detention centre, was allowed to see him for the first time in three months. While the family saw no visible signs of torture, concerns for his wellbeing remain. He has had no access to independent legal representation since December 2017.**

On 9 January, **Bobomurod Abdullayev's** mother, wife and children were invited to visit him in the SNB pre-trial detention centre in Tashkent, Uzbekistan's capital. The short 25-minute visit took place on 10 January in the presence of an SNB officer. This was the first time that the family had been able to see Bobomurod Abdullayev in more than three months and the visit was very emotional. The family said that there were no visible signs of torture on Bobomurod Abdullayev's body.

In November 2017, the NGO Initiative Group of Independent Human Rights Defenders provided Bobomurod Abdullayev with a lawyer, after the previous lawyer resigned claiming his poor health and advanced age prevented him from representing the client. On 26 December 2017 Bobomurod Abdullayev refused the services of the new lawyer. He stated that the lawyer misrepresented what he had said during their first meeting, by claiming that Bobomurod Abdullayev had confessed to writing anti-government articles on an opposition website under a pseudonym (which is widely believed to be the basis of Bobomurod Abdullayev's detention). Human rights defenders in Uzbekistan believe Bobomurod Abdullayev was forced to dismiss his lawyer under pressure from SNB officers. Since then, he has had no access to an independent lawyer.

Bobomurod Abdullayev was detained by SNB officers in Tashkent on 27 September 2017 for allegedly attempting to overthrow the constitutional order of the Republic of Uzbekistan. He has since been held at one of the most notorious detention centres in the country, where torture is commonplace. During that time he has only had limited access to lawyers of his choice and his family. None of the meetings were private. Human rights defenders and colleagues believe he is being targeted for his journalistic work and critical political views.

### **Please write immediately in Uzbek, Russian, English or your own language:**

- Urging the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Bobomurod Abdullayev, as he appears to be detained solely for his journalistic work and criticism of the government, and to drop the charges against him;
- Pending his release, urging the authorities to ensure that Bobomurod Abdullayev is not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, and to ensure that he has full access to all legal safeguards in detention - including regular and unimpeded access to, and opportunity to speak confidentially with, a lawyer of his choice and access to his family;
- Reminding the authorities of their obligations to fully respect the right to freedom of expression.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 26 FEBRUARY 2018 TO:**

Chairman of the National Security Service

Rustam Inoyatov  
9 Matbuotchilar Street  
Tashkent, Uzbekistan  
**Salutation: Dear Chairman**

Prosecutor General

Ihtior Abdullaev  
Prosecutor General's Office  
ul. Gulyamova 66  
Tashkent 700047 Uzbekistan  
Fax: +998 71 133 3917  
Email: prokuratura@lawyer.uz  
**Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General**

**And copies to:**

Director  
Akmal Saidov  
The National Human Rights Centre  
Ul. Mustakillik maidoni 5/3  
Tashkent 100029 Uzbekistan  
Fax: +998 71 239 13 56  
Email: info@nhrc.uz

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below.**

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 232/17. Further information:

[www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur62/7235/2017/en/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur62/7235/2017/en/)

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Bobomurod Abdullayev is an independent journalist and sports commentator. He is also a political analyst, writing under a pseudonym. He has contributed articles to international media organizations.

On 27 September 2017, officers of the Uzbekistani National Security Services (SNB) detained Bobomurod Abdullayev in Tashkent. His whereabouts were unknown to his family for two days. On 29 September, they found out that he was being held at the SNB pre-trial detention centre in Tashkent. On the same day, SNB officers searched Bobomurod Abdullayev's home for over five hours and confiscated books, a computer, memory cards and other media equipment. His wife was able to visit him briefly in detention on 1 October 2017.

On 1 October 2017, in a closed hearing, the Yunusabadskiy District Criminal Court in Tashkent ordered to remand Bobomurod Abdullayev in the SNB pre-trial detention centre, as a criminal suspect who had allegedly prepared and distributed online materials in an attempt to overthrow the constitutional order (Article 159 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan). According to an SNB investigator, Bobomurod Abdullayev was working together with an exiled political opposition leader, Muhammad Salih. Amnesty International's research shows that prisoners in the SNB detention centre are tortured, including in interrogation rooms, punishment cells, toilets and shower rooms, and in purpose-built torture rooms with padded rubber walls and sound-proofing.

The rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly are severely restricted in Uzbekistan. Prominent human rights defenders, government critics and independent journalists are subjected to sustained harassment and intimidation, routine monitoring, arrests, beatings and smear campaigns. Many have been forced into exile while others are prevented from leaving the country. Human rights defenders and independent journalists, both those abroad and those in Uzbekistan, continue to find themselves and their families the target of extensive and repeated media campaigns on websites owned or controlled by the government, both on national television and in the official printed media.

Surveillance by the Uzbekistani authorities at home and abroad helps reinforce the already repressive environment for human rights defenders, journalists, political activists and others. Unlawful surveillance is facilitated by technical and legal systems that fail to provide checks against abuse, contrary to international standards.

Amnesty International has received persistent and credible allegations of routine and pervasive torture and other ill-treatment by security forces during arrest and transfer, in police custody and pre-trial detention and by security forces and prison personnel in post-conviction detention facilities. Torture is used to coerce suspects, detainees and prisoners, including women and men charged with criminal offences such as theft, fraud or murder, into confessing to crimes or incriminating others. Individuals charged with or convicted of anti-state and terrorism-related offences, including those forcibly returned to Uzbekistan, have been particularly vulnerable to torture both in pre-trial detention and in prison following conviction.

The courts rely heavily on torture-tainted "confessions" to hand down convictions. Because allegations of torture and other ill-treatment are rarely effectively investigated, a climate of impunity persists.

Name: Bobomurod Abdullayev  
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 232/17 Index: EUR 62/7721/2018 Issue Date: 15 January 2018