

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER FACES 10 YEARS IN JAIL

On 18 November, Uzbekistani human rights defender Uktam Paradaev was charged with fraud and bribery. He is facing 10 years in prison. He is being targeted for his legitimate human rights work.

Uktam Paradaev, chairman of the Independent Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan of Dzhizakh (Jizzakh) region, in north-eastern Uzbekistan, was detained in the early morning of 16 November at his home in Dzhizakh. Eleven police officers searched his home and confiscated a camera, a computer, USB memory sticks and CDs. Police officers then took Uktam Paradaev to a temporary detention facility at Dustlik district police station in Dzhizakh region, where he is currently being held.

On 18 November, Uktam Paradaev was charged with fraud and bribery under articles 168 and 211 of the Uzbekistani Criminal Code, respectively. If found guilty, he faces up to 10 years in prison. According to Uzbekistani human rights defenders, nine people have testified against Uktam Paradaev saying that he had fraudulently taken money from them, promising among other things to get them a job and buy land. His lawyer was only able to see him on 20 November, four days after his detention and only after charges had already been brought against him.

Amnesty International believes that Uktam Paradaev's detention is part of a pattern of ongoing and longstanding harassment of civil society activists and human rights defenders by the Uzbekistani authorities. Amnesty International believes his detention is politically motivated and intended to obstruct his legitimate work as a human rights defender. Uktam Paradaev is one of a handful of human rights defenders who remain and work in Uzbekistan. He investigates and writes articles for the international media covering human rights issues and has actively worked with human rights defenders inside and outside Uzbekistan. He has reported on the working conditions in the cotton fields. In January 2015, Uktam Paradaev applied for an exit visa, but the authorities would not issue him one. In addition, earlier this year Uktam Paradaev reported that his friends and members of his organization, and even people who asked him for help, were summoned for questioning by the Uzbekistani National Security Service and the police. According to Uktam Paradaev, some of those questioned were subjected to beatings.

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

- Expressing concern that the allegations and charges against Uktam Paradaev are politically motivated and linked to his legitimate human rights work;
- Calling on the Uzbekistani authorities to ensure that Uktam Paradaev has full access to all legal safeguards in detention, in accordance with Uzbekistan's obligations under international human rights law, including access to a lawyer of his choice and protection from torture and other ill-treatment;
- Urging the Uzbekistani authorities to stop the harassment and intimidation of civil society and remind them of their responsibility to protect human rights defenders, as set out in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 1 JANUARY 2016 TO:

Prosecutor General
Ihtior Abdullaev
Prosecutor General's Office
ul. Gulyamova 66
Tashkent 100047 Uzbekistan
Fax: +998 71 133 39 17
Email: info@prokuratura.uz
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

Minister of Internal Affairs
Adham Ahmedbaev
Ministry of Internal Affairs
ul. Junus Rajabiy 1
Tashkent 100029 Uzbekistan
Fax: +998 71 233 89 34
Email: info@mvd.uz
Salutation: Dear Minister

And copies to:
Human Rights Commissioner
Ullugbek Mukhammadiev
Uzbekistan Avenue 16a Tashkent
100027 Uzbekistan
Fax: +998 71 239 81 36
Email: info@ombudsman.uz

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

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER FACES 10 YEARS IN JAIL

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The authorities in Uzbekistan are responsible for grave, systemic and widespread human rights violations, including severe restrictions on the rights to freedom of assembly, association and expression, and torture and other ill-treatment of detainees and prisoners by the security forces is endemic. Prominent human rights defenders, government critics and independent journalists have been forced to leave Uzbekistan to escape persecution or sustained harassment and intimidation by the security forces and local authorities, and many continue to face harassment abroad by the Uzbekistani authorities.

Torture and other ill-treatment are defining features of the Uzbekistani criminal justice system. It is central to how the Uzbekistani authorities deal with dissent, combat actual or perceived security threats and repress political opposition.

Uzbekistan has been criticized by human rights defenders for the use of forced labour during cotton-harvesting. The authorities are anxious that no such evidence is uncovered and brought to the attention of the international community. The authorities claim that the allegations of forced labour and inhuman and degrading living conditions for people drafted in for the cotton harvest are factually wrong and disseminated by rival cotton-producing countries in order to manipulate the global cotton market. The Uzbekistani authorities, in 2013, agreed to independent monitors from the International Labour Organization (ILO) carrying out inspections of the cotton harvest throughout Uzbekistan. However, the ILO monitors were accompanied by government officials and human rights defenders have reported that the authorities issued instructions to those participating in the cotton harvest on how to respond to ILO monitors.

On 31 May 2015, Elena Urlaeva, a human rights defender and the head of the independent NGO Human Rights Defenders' Alliance of Uzbekistan, was detained by police officers and subjected to torture, sexual violence and humiliation to force her to surrender her camera's memory card. That day she had been monitoring the use of forced labour in cotton fields and the memory card contained photographic evidence of human rights violations documented by her on that day. She was kept for several hours in a local police station in the city of Chinaz, Tashkent region, northeast Uzbekistan, and then released without charge.

Name: Uktam Pardaev

Gender m/f: M

UA: 264/15 Index: EUR 62/2916/2015 Issue Date: 20 November 2015