

PUBLIC

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Harassment / Fear of torture and ill-treatment

19 August 2003

RUSSIAN  
FEDERATION

**Bakhrom Khamroev (m) – human rights defender**  
**His family**

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Bakhrom Khamroev is an Uzbek human rights defender with Russian citizenship who has been resident in Moscow since 1992. In the last few months he and his family are reported to have been subjected to harassment by the Russian police and security forces, which has led to his recent arrest under alleged falsified criminal charges. Amnesty International is concerned about these allegations and for the welfare of Bakhrom Khamroev who is currently in pre-trial detention.

At 10.00am on 20 July, RUBOP (Organized Crime Squad) officers from the Moscow region arrested Bakhrom Khamroev outside his home in the north of Moscow. According to Bakhrom Khamroev's wife who witnessed the incident, he was then struck twice, forcing him to double over, whilst something was reportedly inserted into the back pocket of his trousers. He was also said to have been hit several other times in the region of his liver. One of the officers is alleged to have used racially abusive language about Muslims during the incident. Bakhrom Khamroev was then reportedly tied up and it is at this stage that drugs were said to have been "found" in the back pocket of his trousers. He is currently being detained in connection with Article 228, part 4 of the Russian Criminal Code (illegal possession of narcotic substances with the intent to supply in especially large quantities) in Butyrskii pre-trial detention centre in Moscow. If convicted, he could face from seven to 15 years in prison.

A coalition of human rights organizations lodged a petition against the arrest of Bakhrom Khamroev on his behalf, but on 22 July the Butyrskii district court sanctioned his arrest. During the hearing, Bakhrom Khamroev is reported to have professed his innocence.

At a press conference on 24 June, Bakhrom Khamroev had made allegations that the recent officially reported arrests of 55 Central Asians in Moscow, who were described as "Islamic militants", were a fabrication invented by the Russian security forces in order "to cover up their inability to deal adequately with the real terrorist threat in the Russian Federation". It is believed that such activity is the reason why Bakhrom Khamroev has been targeted by the security forces.

Since March, the Khamroev family in Moscow have been targeted for numerous checks, interrogations and harassment; some have reportedly even had to undergo lie detector tests. Bakhrom Khamroev's wife has also alleged that security force officers have regularly demanded that she inform on her husband, and have reportedly threatened her with "severe consequences" if she refuses. This has led Bakhrom Khamroev, his relatives and acquaintances to fear for his safety and in early July he consulted with a lawyer in order to take steps to put a stop to the harassment by the law enforcement agencies. A complaint to this effect was sent to the Moscow regional procuracy on 12 July.

Bakhrom Khamroev has worked alongside human rights organizations, and in particular with the Memorial Human Rights Centre, in championing the rights of Uzbek nationals threatened with extradition to their homeland because of their political or religious convictions. He had been an active member of the secular, pro-democracy and pro-rule of law opposition movement in Uzbekistan called "Birlik", until he was forced to emigrate to the Russian Federation in 1992 following state repression of the movement. Since the mid-1990s, Bakhrom Khamroev has been a representative of the Uzbek opposition journal *Kharakat* which was founded by Uzbek émigrés and is published in the USA, in Russian and Uzbek languages. His activities regarding the distribution of this journal have attracted the attention of Russian security services. Since mid-2002, Bakhrom Khamroev has been detained for questioning by the police and security forces on a number of occasions in connection with his legal status and the financing of the journal *Kharakat*.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In a number of cases that have come to Amnesty International's attention, representatives of minority groups have alleged that police or security force personnel have deliberately planted them with drugs on them, which in some cases has led to false allegations of and even convictions for criminal activities.

Following the Moscow bombings in September 1999, the Memorial Human Rights Centre reported a significant surge in police harassment, including the planting of evidence, which was directed at Chechens but also affected other minorities residing in the capital. Memorial has called this surge in police harassment "a veritable campaign of falsification". A similar rise in law enforcement harassment and falsification tactics against Chechens in Moscow was also noted after a bomb explosion in an underground station in the centre of Moscow in August 2000, and after the October 2002 Melnikov theatre siege in which more 800 people were taken hostage in Moscow.

In the Russian Federation, the use of torture and ill-treatment in police custody and pre-trial detention centres to elicit "confessions" or incriminating information from suspects is commonplace.

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

- expressing concern about allegations that Bakhrom Khamroev, may be facing falsified criminal charges solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression;
- calling for a comprehensive and impartial investigation into these allegations, and that any proceedings against Bakhrom Khamroev be conducted in full accord with international standards;
- calling for a similar investigation into allegations that Bakhrom Khamroev's family have been subjected to harassment by the Russian Federation security service;
- calling upon the authorities to take all appropriate measures to ensure that human rights defenders are able to pursue their lawful role of monitoring and reporting on human rights issues as set out in the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Defenders Resolution.

### **APPEALS TO:**

#### Procurator General of the Russian Federation

Vladimir USTINOV

Ul. Bolshaya Dimitrovka, 15a

103793 Moscow

Russian Federation

**Telegram: Procurator General of the Russian Federation, Moscow, Russian Federation**

**Fax: +7 095 292 88 48**

**Salutation: Dear Procurator General**

#### Minister of Internal Affairs

Boris GRYZLOV

Ul. Zhitnaia, 16

117049 Moscow

Russian Federation

**Telegram: Minister of Internal Affairs, Moscow, Russian Federation**

**Fax: +7 095 237 49 25**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

### **COPIES TO:**

#### President of the Russian Federation

Vladimir PUTIN

Pl. Staraya 4

Kremlin

103132 Moscow

Russian Federation

**Fax: +7 095 206 51 73 /230 24 08**

**Salutation: Dear President**

and to diplomatic representatives of Russian Federation accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 30 September 2003.