

EXTERNAL

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Fear of imminent execution

30 January 1996

UZBEKISTAN Sukhrob SOBIROV (_____ in cyrillic)

Bakhodir SHARIPOV, aged 22 (_____)

Amnesty International fears that Bakhodir Sharipov and Sukhrob Sobirov face imminent execution after having been sentenced to death in the former Soviet republic of Uzbekistan. Appeals against their sentences have been turned down by the Supreme Court, and their only hope of avoiding execution now is a petition for clemency to the President of Uzbekistan.

Bakhodir Sharipov and Sukhrob Sobirov were sentenced to death by Samarkand Regional Court on 7 May 1994 for premeditated, aggravated murder (Article 97 of the Uzbek Criminal Code). Relatives of the two men maintain that they are innocent and there are allegations that they were sentenced to death because they are ethnic Tajiks. Co-defendants in the case are of ethnic Uzbek origin and they were either given light prison sentences or released from custody.

The relatives also claim that they had been approached by officials from the regional procuracy and the regional court at the beginning of the criminal investigation and asked to pay US \$10,000 in exchange for lighter sentences for Bakhodir Sharipov and Sukhrob Sobirov.

Following appeals by the men's relatives and a protest by the general procurator of Uzbekistan, the Presidium of the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan ordered a retrial on 7 May 1995 in the case of two ethnic Uzbek co-defendants but upheld the death sentences of the two ethnic Tajiks. Bakhodir Sharipov and Sukhrob Sobirov lodged petitions for clemency with the President of Uzbekistan in June 1995.

The fathers of both men have only been allowed to visit their sons once on death row. Bakhodir Sharipov's father was denied a second visit because his son had allegedly refused to submit a petition for clemency. Bakhodir Sharipov was working as a welder before his arrest. His father is very active in the Tajik community in Samarkand.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has received allegations recently from unofficial sources that 400 death sentences were passed in Uzbekistan in 1994. If confirmed, this would place Uzbekistan among the top five countries in the world for passing death sentences. It has also been reported that many executions are carried out within 10 days of the petition for clemency being turned down by the President of Uzbekistan, and sometimes within as little as three days.

In addition to the two men named above Amnesty International currently knows of 11 other pending death sentences in Uzbekistan. The organization is calling on the authorities also to commute these sentences. At least six executions were carried out in 1994 and at least two executions were carried out in 1995.

Amnesty International has consistently pressed the Uzbek authorities to reduce the scope of the death penalty as a step towards total abolition; to impose a moratorium on death sentences and executions pending a review of this punishment; and to publish comprehensive statistics on the application of the death penalty.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in Russian, English or your own language:

- expressing concern that Sukhrob Sobirov and Bakhodir Sharipov have been sentenced to death;
- urging President Islam Karimov to grant clemency to Sukhrob Sobirov and Bakhodir Sharipov, and to commute their death sentences;
- urging the authorities to make the outcome of appeals and petitions of clemency known to the relatives of prisoners on death row and to Amnesty International;
- urging President Karimov to commute all other death sentences that come before him.
- expressing sympathy for the families and friends of victims of violent crime, but noting that there is no evidence that the death penalty prevents serious crime any more than other punishments.

APPEALS TO:

1. The President of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov:

Respublika Uzbekistan
700000 g. Tashkent
pr. Uzbekistansky
Rezidentsiya Prezidenta
Prezidentu Karimovu I.A.

Telegrams:Uzbekistan, 700000 Tashkent, Prezidentu Karimovu I.

Faxes:+ 7 3712 39 55 25 or + 7 3712 39 54 00

Salutation:Dear President Karimov

COPIES TO:

1. Head of the Clemency Department at the President's Office, Akhmanov (first name unknown):

Respublika Uzbekistan
700000 g. Tashkent
Apparat Prezidenta
Otdel po voprosam pomilovaniya
Zaveduyuchshemu otdelom Akhatovu

2. Chairman of the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan, Ubaydulla Mingbayev:

Respublika Uzbekistan
700183 g. Tashkent
ul. Abdulla Kodiri, 1
Verkhovny Sud Respubliki Uzbekistan
Predsedatelyu Mingbayevu U.

Fax: +7 3712 41 00 28

3. Oliy Majlis Commissioner for Human Rights, Shavkat Urazayev:

Respublika Uzbekistan
700008 g. Tashkent
pl. Mustakillik
Oliy Majlis Respubliki Uzbekistan
Upolnomochennomu po pravam cheloveka pri Oliy Majlis
URAZAYEVU Sh.

4. Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan, Abdulaziz Komilov

Respublika Uzbekistan
700029 g. Tashkent
pl. Mustakillik, 5

Ministerstvo inostrannykh del
Ministru Komilovu A.

Fax: +7 3712 39 41 58 or 39 15 17 or 39 43 48

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 21 March 1996.