

EXTRA 34/99 Medical concern / Unfair trial/ Possible

prisoner

UZBEKISTAN Akhmadkhon Turakhanov, 59 years old, Islamic cleric

Amnesty International is concerned for the health of Akhmadkhon Turakhanov after he collapsed in court towards the end of his trial on 5 March 1999.

He has diabetes and needs daily insulin injections but has reportedly not received the necessary medical care he requires since being detained in December 1998.

Although he is now in the prison hospital it is still not clear whether he is receiving this treatment as he is allowed no contact with his family or lawyer.

Akhmadkhon Turakhanov was detained in December 1998 charged with attempting to overthrow the constitutional order of Uzbekistan. According to unofficial sources he was initially held in the medical wing of Namangan prison but was moved to a basement cell after he refused to answer questions from the investigating officers. His supporters believe that he was arrested for being openly critical of the local authorities, as chairman of the banned opposition movement *Birlik* ("Unity") and a human rights activist. The judge presiding at his trial, which started on 23 February in Namangan City Court, allegedly stated that "criticizing presidential decrees is an anticonstitutional act".

Amnesty International is concerned that, particularly in the present climate of repression of political dissidents and members of independent Islamic congregations, Akhmadkhon Turakhanov did not receive a fair trial. At his trial he was apparently accused by the prosecution of being a "Wahhabist" (member of a strict Islamic sect) and some witnesses were reportedly forced to sign prepared statements incriminating him. In addition, his lawyer was reportedly allowed no contact with him throughout the whole proceedings. On 5 March he was sentenced to six years' imprisonment.

Akhmadkhon Turakhanov was previously imprisoned for one-and-a-half years in 1994 after a sawn-off shotgun was discovered in his car. Amnesty International considered him a possible prisoner of conscience amid allegations that the criminal case against him was fabricated because of his political opposition to the government. In May 1995 the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention decided that the detention of Akhmadkhon Turakhanov was arbitrary.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Birlik was the first opposition party set up after the country's independence in 1991. It advocated a secular democratic system and liberal economic reform. It was officially registered as a movement in 1991 but was never allowed to register as a political party. A clampdown on government opponents in 1992 led to scores of opposition activists being detained on charges of calling for the state to be overthrown, or prosecuted for slandering the President, or convicted on apparently fabricated charges.

A recent clampdown on the perceived spread of "Wahhabism" led in 1998 to scores of men being arrested and sentenced to long prison terms on charges of terrorism, attempting to overthrow the constitutional order or seeking to establish an Islamist state. Amnesty International believes that people may have been

imprisoned solely for their alleged affiliation to independent Islamic congregations.

After a series of bomb explosions shook the capital Tashkent on 16 February 1999 the president swiftly blamed "Islamic extremists" and others, including the banned political opposition. Since then scores of known or suspected opposition supporters, including former prisoners of conscience and possible prisoners of conscience, and suspected members of independent Islamic congregations, have been arbitrarily detained.

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

- expressing grave concern at reports that Akhmadkhon Turakhanov's health is in a critical condition and that he has been denied medical care since his detention and urging the authorities that he receive appropriate medical attention immediately;
- urging the authorities to take immediate steps to initiate a review of his sentence in the light of allegations that the charges were fabricated to punish him for his political opposition;
- urging the authorities to ensure that he is granted access to his lawyer and to his family.

APPEALS TO (several attempts may be necessary before obtaining a fax tone):

President of Uzbekistan, Islam Abduganievich KARIMOV
700000 g. Tashkent, pr. Uzbekistansky, Rezidentsiya Prezidenta, Prezidentu Karimovu I.A., UZBEKISTAN

Telegrams: Prezidentu Karimovu, 700000 Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Faxes: + 998 71 139 5315

Salutation: Dear President Karimov

Chairman of the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan, Ubaydulla MINGBAYEV
700183 g. Tashkent, ul. Abdulla Kodiri, 1, Verkhovny Sud Respubliki Uzbekistan, Predsedatelyu Mingbayevu U., UZBEKISTAN

Telegrams: Predsedatelyu Mingbayevu, 700183 Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Faxes: + 998 71 141 0028

Salutation: Dear Chairman

Chairman of Namangan City Court, DZHURABOYEV
Namanganskaya Oblast, g. Namangan, Gorodskoy sud, predsedatelyu Dzhurabayevu, UZBEKISTAN

Telegrams: Predsedatelyu Dzhurabayevu, gorodskoy sud, Namangan, Uzbekistan

Salutation: Dear Chairman

COPIES TO:

The Oliy Majlis (Parliamentary) Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Sayora Rashidova

700008 g. Tashkent, pl. Mustakillik, 2, Oliy Majlis Respubliki Uzbekistan
Upolnomochenoy po pravam cheloveka pri Oliy Majlis Rashidovoy S., UZBEKISTAN

Procurator General of Uzbekistan, Buritosh MUSTAFOYEV

700000 g. Tashkent, ul. Gogolya, 66, Prokuratura Respubliki Uzbekistan
Generalnomu prokuroru Mustafoyevu B..

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 8 April 1999.