

EXTERNAL

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@Khazratkul KHUDAYBERDI

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£Uzbekistan

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Khazratkul Khudayberdi was arrested on 9 December 1992 in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. It is believed that Khazratkul Khudayberdi is being held in the investigation isolation prison of the National Security Service in Tashkent. He has reportedly been charged with "calling for the violent overthrow of the state and social system", Article 60 of the Uzbekistan Criminal Code, which carries a possible sentence of up to seven years in prison. The charge relates to Khazratkul Khudayberdi's activities in connection with the foundation of a non-violent social organization called Milli Mejlis ("National Council"). Amnesty International considers Khazratkul Khudayberdi to be a prisoner of conscience detained solely because of his non-violent political activities in opposition to the government of Uzbekistan. Amnesty International is calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

Khazratkul Khudayberdi, who is a member of the opposition Birlik movement, in May 1992 became one of the 11 members of an organizing committee of Milli Mejlis. Each member represented a different political or social organization in Uzbekistan. The committee held a series of meetings beginning in May 1992 to discuss the process of law-making in the republic. This was motivated by what they regarded as indifference or lack of direction within the Supreme Soviet (parliament) of Uzbekistan, and fears that unless there was a dynamic and cohesive approach to drafting new legislation a political, social and economic crisis would develop in Uzbekistan.

The organizing committee drafted a statute for Milli Mejlis which envisaged it as a parliamentary forum which would draft laws and send them to the President of Uzbekistan and the Cabinet of Ministers for approval. Although it was being set up to rival the Supreme Soviet, the organizing committee envisaged that members of the Supreme Soviet would be invited to participate in the Milli Mejlis. Other draft documents produced by the organizing committee were an agreement to be signed by all organizations represented on the committee, an appeal from the Milli Mejlis to the people of Uzbekistan, a letter to President Islam Karimov announcing the formation of the Milli Mejlis and explaining its aims, and a prognosis of the current situation in Uzbekistan. This elaborated on the fears of the Milli Mejlis organizers about an impending social crisis, and commented that civil disorders and violence might erupt in Uzbekistan unless there was political change.

On 14 August 1992 police arrested Babur Shakirov, the chairman of the organizing committee. During a search of his apartment the draft documents produced by the Milli Mejlis organizing committee were confiscated. Specifically on the basis of the draft document offering a prognosis of the likelihood of violent disorder in Uzbekistan, Babur Shakirov was charged with calling for the violent overthrow of the state (he has been adopted as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International). Khazratkul Khudayberdi and the other organizing committee members were repeatedly questioned by

police. Khazratkul Khudayberdi was finally arrested on the same charge as Babur Shakirov on 9 December 1992, immediately upon his return to Tashkent from Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, where he had attended an international conference on human rights in Central Asia.

On 10 December 1992 Uzbekistan's parliament banned the Birlik movement, two days after a new Constitution was passed which included commitments to a multi-party democracy and to fundamental human rights.