

PUBLIC

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9 April 1999

Further information on UA 43/99 (EUR 62/05/99, 9 March 1999) - Fear for safety/incommunicado detention

UZBEKISTAN Rashid Bekzhon
New name: Komil Bekzhon

Amnesty International has learned that Rashid Bekzhon, detained incommunicado since 23 February 1999, faces charges of terrorism. Terrorism carries a possible death sentence, under Article 155 of the Uzbek Criminal Code.

His name appears on a list being circulated by the Uzbek authorities of more than 100 people imprisoned in connection with a series of explosions in the capital, Tashkent, on 16 February 1999. Since the explosions the Uzbek authorities have carried out a clampdown on perceived opponents of President Karimov, and their families and associates, including Muhammad Salih, the exiled leader of the banned democratic opposition party *Erk*.

Rashid Bekzhon is a brother of Muhammad Salih. Two of his other brothers, Muhammad Bekzhon and Komil Bekzhon, are also believed to be in detention. Muhammad Bekzhon was deported to Uzbekistan from Ukraine on 18 March (See UA 48/99, EUR 62/05/99, 9 March, and follow-up, EUR 62/06/99, 25 March). Komil Bekzhon, who had been detained from 19 to 22 February (See UA 34/99, EUR 62/02/99, 25 February), was reportedly re-arrested at his home in Khorezm Region on 31 March, by the head of the Yangiarskiy district police station and the director of the local collective farm. To Amnesty International's knowledge he has not had access to a lawyer. This causes grave concern, as access to a lawyer is an important safeguard against torture, ill-treatment, coerced confessions and other abuses.

President Karimov has publicly blamed the 16 February explosions on extremist Islamic groups working with Muhammad Salih, whom he reportedly described as "a collaborator in this terror act and sabotage" who should "come and admit his crimes" at a March news conference. Both the Interior Minister and General Prosecutor have stated on national television that, in accordance with an order from the President, those whose names appear on lists of suspects must turn themselves in and "admit their guilt". Any who fail to do so will be held accountable and punished, as will their fathers. These public statements by the Uzbek authorities appear to further reduce the chances of a fair trial for those sought in connection with the explosions.

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

- expressing concern at the detention of Komil Bekzhon and the continued detention of Rashid Bekzhon, and urging the authorities to immediately disclose their whereabouts;
- urging that they be protected from any form of ill-treatment and be allowed immediate access to family and legal representatives;
- expressing concern at allegations that they may have been arrested solely because of their relationship to exiled leader of the democratic opposition *Erk* party, Muhammad Salih;
- pointing out that every person charged with a criminal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until and unless found guilty after a fair trial, and that it is a duty of all public authorities not to prejudice the outcome of

legal proceedings, and therefore asking them not to make statements which could prejudice the outcome of any trial of the two men.

APPEALS TO:

President of Uzbekistan, Islam KARIMOV
700163 g. Tashkent, 43 pr. Uzbekistansky,
Rezidentsiya Prezidenta, Prezidentu Karimovu I.A.,
UZBEKISTAN

Telegrams: Prezidentu Karimovu, 700163 Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Faxes: + 998 71 139 5525 or 139 5510

email: uzinfo@uzinfo.gov.uz

Salutation: Dear President Karimov

Minister of Internal Affairs, Zakirzhan ALMATOV
700029 g. Tashkent, ul. Novruz, 1,
Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del, Ministru Almatovu Z.A.,
UZBEKISTAN

Telegrams: Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del, 700029 Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Faxes: + 998 71 133 8934 or 154 9428 or 139 1974

Salutation: Dear Minister

Procurator General of Uzbekistan, Usmon Khudoykulov
700000 g. Tashkent, ul. Gogolya, 66,
Prokuratura Respubliki Uzbekistan, Generalnomu prokuroru Khudoykulovu U.

Telegrams: Generalnomu prokuroru, 700000 Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Faxes: + 998 71 133 9936 or 133 8320

Salutation: Dear Procurator General

COPIES TO:

Chairman of the National Centre for Human Rights, Akmal SAIDOV
700008 g. Tashkent, 5/3 Mustakillik Maidoni,
Natsionalny Tsentr po pravam cheloveka, Predsedatelyu SAIDOVU A.
UZBEKISTAN

Telegrams: Uzbekistan, 700008 g. Tashkent, Natsionalny Tsentr po pravam cheloveka, predsedatelyu Saidovu

Faxes: + 998 71 139 1356 or 139 4516

email: office@nchr.uz

Salutation: Dear Chairman

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 May 1999.