

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: EUR 62/19/94
Distr: UA/SC

UA 263/94

"Disappearance"

8 July 1994

UZBEKISTAN Murad Dzhurayev (_____ in cyrillic), aged 53
 Erkin Ashurov (_____), aged 39

Murad Dzhurayev and Erkin Ashurov, activists of the outlawed *Erk* (Freedom) opposition political party, have "disappeared". The two men were kidnapped on the night of 17-18 June 1994 in Almaty, the capital of Kazakhstan, where they were living as political exiles from neighbouring Uzbekistan. Their abductors are believed to have been officers of Uzbekistan's Ministry of Internal Affairs who have taken them back to Uzbekistan. However, the Uzbekistan authorities have not acknowledged that they are holding the two men.

According to unofficial sources, six officers of Uzbekistan's Ministry of Internal Affairs came to the apartment in Almaty where Murad Dzhurayev and Erkin Ashurov were living. Before entering they ripped out the telephone line into the apartment, then broke down the door, rushed in and assaulted and handcuffed Murad Dzhurayev and Erkin Ashurov. After a search of the apartment (during which the officers allegedly stole US\$400), Murad Dzhurayev and Erkin Ashurov were taken away.

Sources have suggested that the two men have been arrested in connection with a continuing clampdown against a clandestine newspaper which *Erk* produces outside Uzbekistan and distributes clandestinely inside the country. The Uzbekistan authorities apparently believe that the newspaper originates in Almaty.

Murad Dzhurayev is a former deputy to Uzbekistan's Supreme Council (parliament) and former chairman of the district council in Mubarek, Kashkadarya Region, southern Uzbekistan. Erkin Ashurov is a former director of a tea processing factory in Samarkand, but was dismissed from that post in 1992 because of his membership of *Erk*.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Freedom Democratic Party - *Erk* - was founded in April 1990, and was officially registered as Uzbekistan's first opposition political party in September 1991 (the ruling party in Uzbekistan is the People's Democratic Party, the former Communist Party). *Erk* claims a nationwide registered membership of 54,000.

During 1992 *Erk* took an increasingly radical opposition stance in the face of harassment from the authorities. Since October 1993 *Erk* has been effectively banned after it did not meet the terms of a decree requiring all political organizations to re-register. A major official clampdown against the party involving widespread arrests has been going on in 1994, apparently in an attempt to stop the extensive clandestine distribution of the banned *Erk* newspaper.

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

- calling on the authorities to clarify the whereabouts of Murad Dzhurayev and Erkin Ashurov, and to release them immediately if they are not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee the physical safety and well being of Murad Dzhurayev and Erkin Ashurov, noting that the victims of "disappearance"

are especially vulnerable to torture or extrajudicial execution;
 - calling on the authorities to put a stop immediately to all forms of harassment and persecution of members of the *Erk* party who have sought peacefully to exercise their fundamental human rights.

APPEALS TO

1. The President of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov

Respublika Uzbekistan

g. Tashkent

pl. Mustakillik

Apparat Prezidenta

Prezidentu Karimovu

Telegrams:Uzbekistan, Tashkent, apparat Prezidenta, Prezidentu Karimovu I.A.

Faxes:+ 7 3712 39 55 25 or + 7 3712 39 54 00 or + 7 3712 55 10

Telexes:116116 BAHOR SU

Salutation: Dear President Karimov

2. Minister of Internal Affairs, Zakirzhan Almatov

Respublika Uzbekistan

g. Tashkent

ul. G. Lopatina, 1

MVD Respubliki Uzbekistan

Ministru Almatovu Z.A.

Telegrams:Uzbekistan, Tashkent, MVD, Ministru Almatovu Z.A.

Salutation:Dear Minister

3. Procurator General of Uzbekistan, Buritosh Mustafojev

Respublika Uzbekistan

g. Tashkent

ul. Gogolya, 66

Prokuratura Respubliki Uzbekistan

Generalnomu prokuroru Mustafojevu B.

**Telegrams:Uzbekistan, Tashkent, Prokuratura, Generalnomu prokuroru
 Mustafojevu B.**

Salutation:Dear Procurator General

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan, Saidmukhtar Saidkasymov

Respublika Uzbekistan

g. Tashkent

Ministerstvo inostrannykh del

Ministru Saidkasymovu S.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 19 August 1994.