

20 August 1999

Further information on UA 43/99 (EUR 62/05/99, 9 March 1999) and follow-ups (EUR 62/06/99, 12 March 1999; EUR 62/09/99, 9 April 1999; EUR 62/15/99, 5 August 1999) - fear for safety/incommunicado detention and new concern: unfair trial

UZBEKISTAN Rashid Bekzhon

Rashid Bekzhon has been sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment. The verdict, which had been expected on 16 August, was finally announced on 18 August.

Of the five others who went on trial with him, Muhammad Bekzhon and Yusif Ruzimuradov were sentenced to 15 years, Mamadali Makhmudov to 14 years, Kobil Diyarov to 12 years and Negmat Sharipov to eight years (see UA 34/99, EUR 62/02/99, 25 February 1999, and follow-ups; and UA 48/99, EUR 50/01/99, 16 March 1999 and follow-ups). All six are to serve their sentences in a strict regime prison camp and will have their property confiscated.

Amnesty International has received a written statement signed by all six defendants on 18 August, which reiterates earlier allegations that they were tortured and ill-treated in pre-trial detention in order to force them to incriminate Muhammad Salih, the exiled leader of the banned democratic opposition party *Erk*, and to confess to fabricated charges. They allege among other things that they were beaten with rubber truncheons and plastic bottles filled with water, suffocated, tortured with electric shocks and threatened with the rape of their wives.

Following an adjournment on 3 August, the trial had been moved to a higher court and reopened on 9 August in Tashkent Regional Court without notice to the defence or relatives of the accused.

Representatives of the Organisation for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE), the British and US embassies, foreign news agencies and local human rights observers were denied entry to the courtroom despite lodging official protests.

During the hearing the prosecution reportedly demanded long prison sentences for all six defendants. It called for Mamadali Makhmudov to be sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment, Negmat Sharipov to 16 years, Kobil Diyarov and Rashid Bekzhon to 18 years, Muhammad Bekzhon to 19 years and Yusif Ruzimuradov to 20 years. All of them reportedly pleaded not guilty and alleged in court that during the investigation they were forced to confess to fabricated charges. Amnesty International received a written statement by Mamadali Makhmudov in which he described being systematically tortured in pre-trial detention. This included being constantly beaten, having his hands and feet burned, being suspended by his hands tied behind his back, having a gas mask put over his face with the air supply turned off and being threatened with rape and death. In addition he was told that his wife and two daughters had been taken into detention and that they would be raped in front of his eyes if he did not confess and admit his guilt in front of a television camera. He was also given injections and made to drink unknown substances.

On 12 August, the last day of the trial, six relatives were allowed into the courtroom after a petition to the presiding trial judge. Others were refused entry on the grounds that there were no more seats in the courtroom. It appeared later that most of the available seats had been taken up by members of the

Ministry of Internal Affairs special forces. The defence was given just 40 minutes on the last day of the trial in which to present their case.

Only five relatives were allowed into the courtroom to hear the verdict. Foreign observers, including representatives of the OSCE and the US embassy, were again denied entry.

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

- expressing grave concern at violations of fair trial rights in the case of Rashid Bekzhon and his five co-defendants, in particular that the court did not take into account allegations that all of them were tortured in pre-trial detention to force them to confess;
- calling for a prompt and impartial investigation into the allegations of torture, with the results made public.

APPEALS TO:

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

E-mails: uzinfo@uzinfo.gov.uz

Salutation: Dear President Karimov

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

Telegrams: Upolnomochenoy po pravam cheloveka, 700008 Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Faxes: + 998 71 139 8555

E-mails: mtillaboev@oliymajlis.gov.uz

Salutation: Dear Ms Rashidova

General Procurator of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Buritosh MUSTAFOYEV
700000 g. Tashkent, ul. Gogolya, 66, Prokuratura Respubliki Uzbekistan,
Generalnomu prokuroru MUSTAFOYEVU B., MUSTAFOYEV, UZBEKISTAN

Telegrams: Generalnomu prokuroru, 700000 Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Salutation: Dear Procurator General

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

Telegrams: Predsedatelyu Verkhovnogo Suda, 700183 Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Faxes: (998 71) 141 00 28

Salutation: Dear Chairman

COPIES TO:

Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Zakirzhan Almatovich ALMATOV

700029 g. Tashkent, ul. Novruz, 1, Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del,
Ministru vnutrennikh del Almatovu Z.A., UZBEKISTAN

Telegrams: Ministru vnutrennikh del, 700029 Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Faxes: + 998 71 133 89 34

Salutation:Dear Minister

Chairman of Tashkent Regional Court, name not known
700121 g. Tashkent, ul. Yakkasaray, 4, Tashkentskiy Oblastnoy Sud,
predsedatelyu, UZBEKISTAN

Telegrams:Tashkentskiy Oblastnoy Sud, 700121 Tashkent, Uzbekistan

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 30 September 1999.