

EXTRA 178/99

Death Penalty/possible imminent execution

UZBEKISTAN **Arsen Albertovich ARUTYUNYAN** (_____), aged 20
Danis Vladimirovich SIRAZHEV (_____), aged 24

Arsen Arutyunyan and Danis Sirazhev are believed to be in danger of imminent execution. An appeal against their death sentences has been lodged with the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan, which is expected to make a decision on 20 December.

The two men are the lead singers of a well-known Uzbek pop group, *Al-Vakil*. They were charged with the April 1998 killing of a famous Uzbek singer, Laylo Aliyeva, and sentenced to death by Tashkent City Court on 3 November 1999 for premeditated, aggravated murder (Article 97 of the Uzbek Criminal Code).

According to the information received by Amnesty International, both men were held incommunicado for two weeks after they were detained, on 3 June 1999 in Tashkent. After he was granted access, Arsen Arutyunyan's lawyer was still not allowed to meet with him in private. The two men confessed to killing Laylo Aliyeva, but there is serious concern that their confessions were extracted under duress. According to reliable sources Arsen Arutyunyan's family was threatened several times. There was also an attempted assault on his sister. Some of his family have fled Uzbekistan as a result.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases and without reservation, as a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Uzbekistan retains the death penalty for eight offences, including aggravated murder. In 1998 the *Oliy Majlis* (parliament) removed the death penalty from the criminal code as a punishment for five other offences.

Amnesty International is seriously concerned that Uzbekistan continues to carry out executions, and this concern is heightened by the fact that a substantial number of men sentenced to death have alleged that they were tortured in pre-trial detention. Conditions on death row have been described by former prisoners as particularly cruel. Amnesty International has consistently pressed the Uzbek authorities to reduce the scope of the death penalty as a step towards total abolition. The organization has also asked that they impose a moratorium on death sentences and executions pending a review of this punishment and that they publish comprehensive statistics on the application of the death penalty.

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

- urging the President to use his constitutional authority to commute the death sentences passed on Arsen Arutyunyan and Danis Sirazhev, as well as all other death sentences that come before him;
- urging that a moratorium be imposed on death sentences and executions pending a comprehensive review of the death penalty;
- expressing concern at allegations that Arsen Arutyunyan's and Danis Sirazhev's confessions were extracted by force and asking the authorities to launch an independent and impartial investigation into these allegations;
- asking for assurances that the safety of both men's families be guaranteed.

APPEALS TO: (Please note that fax numbers can be difficult to obtain. If a voice answers, repeat "fax" until connected)

President of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Respublika Uzbekistan
700000 g. Tashkent
pr. Uzbekistansky
Rezidentsia prezidenta
Prezidentu Respubliki Uzbekistan
KARIMOVU I.A.

Telegrams: Prezidentu Karimovu/700000 Tashkent/Uzbekistan

Faxes: + 998 71 139 53 15 or 139 53 25

e-mail: uzinfo@uzinfo.gov.uz

Salutation: Dear President Karimov

Head of the Clemency Department at the President's Office

Respublika Uzbekistan
700000 g. Tashkent
Apparat Prezidenta
Respubliki Uzbekistan
Otdel po voprosam pomilovaniya
Zaveduyushchemu otdelom
AKHMANOVU N.

Telegrams: Akhmanovu N./ Otdel pomilovaniya/700000 Tashkent/Uzbekistan

Salutation: Dear Mr Akhmanov

COPIES TO:

Chairman of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Respublika Uzbekistan
700183 g. Tashkent
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Verkhovny Sud Respubliki Uzbekistan
Predsedatelyu MINGBAYEVU U.

Telegrams: Predsedatelyu Verkhovnogo Suda/Tashkent 700000/Uzbekistan

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Salutation: Dear Chairman

Oliy Majlis Commissioner for Human Rights

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700008 g. Tashkent
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Upolnomochennoy po pravam
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Salutation: Dear Ms Rashidova

General Procurator of the Republic of Uzbekistan

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Salutation:Dear Procurator General

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 11 January 2000.