

UKRAINE/UZBEKISTAN Muhammad Bekzhon
Yusif Ruzimuradov

Two members of the Uzbek opposition face imminent forcible deportation from Ukraine. If returned to Uzbekistan, both men would be at risk of imprisonment, torture or ill-treatment, simply for the non-violent expression of their political beliefs. Yusif Ruzimuradov is a prominent member of the banned opposition party *Erk*. Muhammad Bekzhon is one of the editors of the party's newspaper, also called *Erk*, and is the brother of Muhammad Salih, the party's exiled leader.

They were reportedly detained on 15 March 1999 in the Ukrainian capital, Kiev, during a joint Uzbek/Ukrainian police raid on their apartments. During the raid police reportedly confiscated copies of the *Erk* newspaper, computers and audio tapes. Their arrests are believed to be part of a clampdown on perceived opponents of the President of Uzbekistan, and their families and associates, following a series of bomb explosions in the capital, Tashkent, on 16 February. On 15 March President Karimov of Uzbekistan publicly named Muhammad Salih as one of the organizers of the bomb explosions and called for his arrest and extradition to Uzbekistan.

Both have lived in the city since 1994, when they fled Uzbekistan to escape arrest during an official clampdown on *Erk*. Both men have been actively involved in the production abroad of the *Erk* newspaper and its clandestine distribution in Uzbekistan. In April 1994 Yusif Ruzimuradov had escaped from Ukrainian police, who had taken him across the border into Kazakstan, where they believed the newspaper was being produced.

Amnesty International believes that the forcible deportation of Muhammad Bekzhon and Yusif Ruzimuradov to Uzbekistan by the Ukrainian authorities would be contrary to Ukraine's obligations under international law. *Refoulement* where there are substantial grounds for believing the person(s) may be in danger of torture is in clear violation of Article 3 of the Convention against Torture, to which Ukraine is a party, and of the European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which the Ukrainian parliament ratified in 1997 as part of the country's obligations on entering the Council of Europe.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Erk was founded in April 1990 by Muhammad Salih and was officially registered as Uzbekistan's first opposition political party. Since October 1993 both the party and its newspaper have effectively been banned. At the beginning of 1994 a group of *Erk* activists began to produce the newspaper in Moscow and to distribute it clandestinely within Uzbekistan. The newspaper is still produced abroad. Like other opposition parties and movements, many *Erk* members, especially senior figures, were targeted for arrest by the Uzbek authorities for their peaceful political activities. Former prisoners of conscience and political prisoners have testified that they were beaten, ill-treated and tortured during their time in detention in Uzbekistan.

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

- urging the Ukrainian authorities not to forcibly return Muhammad Bekzhon and Yusif Ruzimuradov to Uzbekistan, where they may be at risk of serious human rights violations for the non-violent expression of their political beliefs;

- noting that agreements between countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States permit Ukraine to refuse extradition if there are fears that the person in question will face human rights violations if extradited;

- reminding the Ukrainian authorities of their obligations under international law, in particular the European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

APPEALS TO:

Procurator General of Ukraine, Mykhaylo POTEBENKO
252601 g. Kiev-II,
ul. Reznitskaya, 13/15
Prokuratura Ukrainy
Generalnomu prokuroru POTEBENKO M.
UKRAINE

Telegrams: Ukraina, 252601 g. Kiev, generalnomu prokuroru Potebenko

Fax: +380 44 296 89 03

Salutation: Dear Procurator General

Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, Yuriy KRAVCHENKO
252024 g. Kiev
ul. Bogomoltsa, 10
Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del
Ministru KRAVCHENKO Yu.
UKRAINE

Telegrams: Ukraina, 252024 g. Kiev, ministru vnutrennikh del KRAVCHENKO

Fax: + 380 44 291 17 33

Salutation: Dear Minister

Head of the Directorate for Migration and Refugees of the State Committee of Ukraine for Nationalities and Migration, Olena Malynovska
g. Kiev
21/8 Institutska ul.
UKRAINE

Telegrams: Ukraina, g. Kiev, Komitet po natsionalnostyey, direktoru po delam migratsii Malynovska

Fax: + 380 44 293 22 46

Salutation: Dear Director

COPIES TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Borys TARASYUK
252501 g. Kiev 24
ul. Karla Liebknecht 15/1
Ministerstvo inostrannykh del Ukrainy
Ministru TARASYUKU B.
UKRAINE

Fax: +380 44 226 3169 Telex: 131373 Rubin

Head of Department of Migration and Minorities at Kiev City State Administration, Volodymyr Novik
252070 g. Kiev-70
Voloshskaya ul. 31

UKRAINE

Fax: + 380 44 416 3054

and to diplomatic representatives of UKRAINE/UZBEKISTAN accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 28 April 1999.