

PUBLIC

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Impunity; Fear for safety

04 November 2004

TAJIKISTAN

**Vladimir Vasilchikov (m), aged 41, preacher in a Baptist church
Viktor Dudenkov (m), aged 35, member of the church
Elena Dudenkova (f), wife of Viktor Dudenkov**

Despite substantial evidence that Vladimir Vasilchikov, Elena Dudenkova and her husband Viktor Dudenkov were ill-treated by police, Tajik authorities have recently closed an investigation into allegations of their ill-treatment, stating they had found “no sign of a crime”. Amnesty International fears for their safety and is concerned that the failure to thoroughly investigate the allegations encourages the pattern of impunity for ill-treatment by police.

Vladimir Vasilchikov, a preacher of the Awakening Baptist Church in the town of Nurek, south of the capital Dushanbe, and Viktor Dudenkov, a member of the Church, were allegedly beaten by police at the local police station between 16 and 23 June. Elena Dudenkova was insulted, forced to stand up for several hours and denied food and drink. The three were summoned for questioning into the case of Vladimir Vasilchikov’s mother Mariya Vasilchikova, who was last seen in June 2002. Police accused the men of killing her although no formal charges were brought. They consistently maintained their innocence and alleged they were pressurized by police into signing “confessions”.

Viktor Dudenkov reported that he was ill-treated for three hours on 21 June: “They beat me on my temples, neck and chest. When I fell down they kicked me in the thorax. Then they forced me to stand up and beat me again until I fell on the floor. When they noticed that traces of their boots were visible on my shirt they forced me to take it off and continued to beat me.” Viktor Dudenkov said he lost consciousness several times. “When I came to I heard how they said that in case I die they would throw my corpse in the river Vakhsh,” he added. Vladimir Vasilchikov is believed to have been beaten several times. He described how he was beaten on the face, stomach, chest and left shoulder. Police officers repeatedly turned down the requests of a lawyer to see Viktor Dudenkov and Vladimir Vasilchikov.

On 23 June police reportedly forced Vladimir Vasilchikov to sign a document stating that the police had treated him humanely and to promise that he would not complain about his treatment. On the same day police are said to have taken him for a medical examination in the town of Vakhdat, not far from Nurek. Following pressure by police the doctor reportedly did not take notes on any of the injuries. Vladimir Vasilchikov reported that he did not mention the beatings out of fear of reprisals because a procuracy official from Nurek and a senior police officer were present throughout the examination.

Following complaints by both men to the General Procuracy, a key judicial body charged with considering such complaints, they were examined by doctors at the Republican Centre of Forensic Medicine in Dushanbe. On 25 June the experts concluded that they suffered from concussion and head injuries. Both had to be hospitalized for two weeks.

They continued to appeal to the authorities, urging them to bring those responsible for the ill-treatment to justice. However, on 5 August the procuracy of Khatlon region closed the investigation into the allegations of ill-treatment stating it had found “no signs of a crime” in the activities of the police. In a letter received on 28 October the General Procuracy confirmed the decision of the regional procuracy.

“This means that the same people who beat Vladimir and Viktor and humiliated Elena can turn up again and do whatever they want to them knowing they will not be made responsible for anything. Those who should investigate the case don’t pay attention to the testimonies of ordinary people and do not even take into

account the forensic examination”, said Georgi Akimov, a representative of the Republican Union of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in Tajikistan.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International receives reports about torture and ill-treatment by police in Tajikistan on a regular basis. Those targeted have included alleged Islamists as well as suspects charged with ordinary crimes. Allegations persisted that in the large majority of cases no thorough and impartial investigations were conducted and the perpetrators enjoyed impunity.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Russian, Tajik or your own language:

- urging the authorities to promptly open a thorough and independent investigation into allegations that Elena Dudenkova, her husband Viktor Dudenkov, and Vladimir Vasilchikov were ill-treated in Nurek police station between 16 and 23 June;
- expressing concern at allegations that the investigations carried out so far have not been thorough and impartial and that the conclusions by the Republican Centre of Forensic Medicine were not taken into account;
- urging the authorities to ensure that those found responsible for the ill-treatment be brought to justice;
- calling for the authorities to protect Elena Dudenkova, her husband Viktor Dudenkov, and Vladimir Vasilchikov from further ill-treatment.

APPEALS TO: Please note that it may be difficult to send faxes or emails. If they do not go through, please send your letter by post.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan

Talbak Nazarovich Nazarov; Respublika Tajikistan; 734051 g. Dushanbe; pr. Rudaki, 42; Ministerstvo inostrannykh del Respubliki Tajikistan; Ministru NAZAROVU T.

Fax: +992 - 372 - 21 02 59

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Salutation: Dear Minister

President of the Republic of Tajikistan

Imomali Rakhmonov; Respublika Tajikistan; 734023 g. Dushanbe; pr. Rudaki, 80; Apparat Prezidenta Respubliki Tajikistan; Prezidentu RAKHMONOVU I.Sh.

Salutation: Dear President Rakhmonov

Procurator General of the Republic of Tajikistan

Bobokhon Bobokhonov; Respublika Tajikistan; 734043 g. Dushanbe; prospekt A. Sino 126; Prokuratura Respubliki Tajikistan; Generalnomu prokuroru; BOBOKHONOVU B.

Salutation: Dear Procurator General

COPIES TO:

Nurek Police station

Respublika Tajikistan; Khatlon oblast; g. Nurek; gorodskaya policiya, OVD; ul. Izvestiya 7; Nachalniku

and to diplomatic representatives of TAJIKISTAN accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 16 December 2004.