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Erosion of the right to freedom of expression and association, torture of detainees, and no access for international monitors to Uzbekistan

Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Uzbekistan

The space for freedom of expression and association continues to shrink in Uzbekistan. Prominent human rights defenders, government critics and independent journalists have been forced to leave Uzbekistan to escape persecution by security forces and local authorities, and many continue to face harassment by the Uzbekistani authorities from abroad.

Amnesty International deeply regrets Uzbekistan's rejection of recommendations by several states to release those detained on politically motivated charges claiming that such information is "factually wrong".¹ At least eight human rights defenders convicted in unfair trials are currently serving long prison terms in cruel, inhuman and degrading conditions.

Uzbekistan maintains that some of the recommendations aimed at combating torture have been or are being implemented.² However, despite some positive changes to national legislation, such as the adoption in September 2011 of a law on the treatment of individuals in pre-charge and pre-trial detention, the organization continues to receive reports of widespread torture and other ill-treatment of detainees and prisoners in Uzbekistan. In most cases the authorities fail to conduct effective investigations into these allegations, and impunity for the perpetrators prevails.

Amnesty International is concerned that under the pretext of national and regional security or the fight against terrorism, suspected members of Islamic movements, Islamist groups and banned parties are forcibly returned to Uzbekistan and subjected to incommunicado detention, torture and other ill-treatment, and long prison sentences in cruel, inhuman and degrading conditions, following unfair trials.

The organization is deeply disappointed that during the review Uzbekistan once again stated that the issue of Andizhan "is closed".³ It is crucial that Uzbekistan agrees to and facilitates a thorough, independent and impartial international investigation into the events in Andizhan on 12-13 May 2005, in which hundreds of individuals, including women and children, were killed when the security forces opened fire on the mostly unarmed demonstrators.

Amnesty International is concerned that Uzbekistan appears determined to remain closed to international monitoring and also deeply disappointed that Uzbekistan has rejected recommendations to strengthen and deepen its interaction with international mechanisms,

¹ A/HRC/24/7, recommendations 136.43 (Australia), 136.46 (Canada), 136.56 (Slovakia), 136.58 (France).

² A/HRC/24/7, recommendations 134.7 (Germany), 134.8 (Ireland), 134.9 (Austria), 134.10 (Slovakia), 134.11 (Canada), 134.12 (Namibia)

³ A/HRC/24/7, p. 49

including the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council,⁴ as “not part of its obligations under internationally agreed human rights standards”⁵.

Background

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Uzbekistan on 19 September 2013 during its 24th session. Prior to the adoption of the review outcome, Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above.

Amnesty International had earlier submitted information on the situation of human rights in Uzbekistan: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR62/001/2012/en/e42ea16d-a6b1-4f4b-beaf-b974e57cb2df/eur620012012en.pdf>

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⁴ A/HRC/24/7, recommendations 136.21-136.35 (Slovenia, Guatemala, Belgium, Portugal, Costa Rica, Tunisia, Montenegro, Spain, Japan, Brazil, Hungary, Spain, Latvia, Ireland, Netherlands, Paraguay)

⁵ A/HRC/24/7, p. 27