



EXTERNAL
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Nosir ZOKHIR (Носир ЗОХИР)
Akhmadkhon TURAKHON-OGLY (Ахмадхон ТУРАХОН-ОГЉЫ)

Uzbekistan

6 December 1993

Nosir Zokhir and Akhmadkhon Turakhon-ogly, activists in the *Birlik* (Unity) opposition movement, were arrested on 26 November 1993 in connection with the discovery of hand grenades during searches of their homes in the city of Namangan, eastern Uzbekistan, by state security officials. Amnesty International would not normally take up the case of someone arrested in connection with illegal possession of a weapon, but the organization is concerned about allegations that the grenades were planted by state security officials in the homes of Nosir Zokhir and Akhmadkhon Turakhon-ogly in order to fabricate a criminal case against them because of their political opposition to the Government of Uzbekistan. Amnesty International is currently seeking further information about the charges against Nosir Zokhir and Akhmadkhon Turakhon-ogly.

Nosir Zokhir is the chairman of the *Birlik* regional organization in Namangan region. He is a musician by profession, and is married with eight children. Akhmadkhon Turakhon-ogly is chairman of the *Birlik* organization in Namangan city, and is an Islamic cleric by profession. Unofficial sources report that on the evening of 26 November plain-clothes officers believed to be from the National Security Service visited the homes of Nosir Zokhir and Akhmadkhon Turakhon-ogly claiming that they wished to conduct a search for illegal documents. In the course of the searches in each home they reportedly discovered a single hand grenade. Sources allege that the grenades were planted by the state security officials in the course of the searches.

Background information on the *Birlik* movement

Birlik first emerged out of an environmental protest movement in the late 1980s. It advocates a secular democratic system and liberal economic reform, and claimed 54,000 members as of the end of 1992. In November 1991 *Birlik* was granted official registration as a movement, but the Justice Ministry subsequently refused to register it as a political party, first of all arguing that a political party could not have the same name as a movement which was already registered, and then citing irregularities in the party's documentation, including its membership list (a party must submit a membership list of at least 3,000 names and addresses to the Justice Ministry to gain registration). *Birlik* was also prevented on technical grounds from putting forward a candidate for the presidential election held the following month. In January 1993 it was suspended for three months by

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order of the Supreme Court on the grounds of "intent to organize public demonstrations", the movement's leaders being accused of having become "puppets of the forces that are interested in provoking discord, anarchy and arbitrariness in the now stable republic". Since October it has effectively been banned after failing to satisfy the terms of a decree issued in March requiring all political organizations to re-register by 1 October; media sources reported that bureaucratic obstacles had deliberately been placed in the way of repeated attempts by *Birlik* to register.

Birlik activists have been subject to repeated harassment by the authorities, including arrest (either on politically motivated charges or on criminal charges which may be fabrications), assault, and dismissal from work (see the AI reports *Uzbekistan: Clampdown on dissent*, AI Index: EUR 62/09/93, published in June 1993, and *Uzbekistan: Clampdown on dissent - an update: prisoners of conscience on trial*, AI Index: EUR 62/26/92, published in September).