

URGENT ACTION

DEFENDER KEPT IN FORCED PSYCHIATRIC DETENTION

On 28 November a court decided to extend the detention of Uzbekistani blogger and human rights defender Nafosat Olloshkurova in a psychiatric hospital. Nafosat Olloshkurova was detained and beaten by police on 23 September while monitoring and reporting about a peaceful protest. She was placed in psychiatric detention on 26 September. There are serious concerns that she is being subjected to medical treatment without her consent and that her health has deteriorated while in detention. She must be immediately released.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev
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Dear President,

I am deeply concerned about the wellbeing of **Nafosat Olloshkurova**, a blogger and human rights defender, who is currently kept in detention in a psychiatric hospital in the city of Urgench. I urge you to give your immediate attention to her case and task the Prosecutor General's Office to ensure she is immediately released.

Nafosat Olloshkurova was one of 14 people given administrative detention after police broke up a peaceful protest march from Khorezm to Tashkent on 23 September. She had been monitoring the march and covering developments on Facebook under her pen name Shabnam Olloshkurova. She was filming the police's intervention when they detained and beat her.

Nafosat Olloshkurova is a human rights defender who is being targeted for exercising her right to freedom of expression and raising human rights concerns. Moreover, her initial administrative detention breached Article 29 of the Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Administrative Responsibility that stipulates that "administrative detention cannot be applied to [...] mothers of children younger than three years old, to persons raising children up to 14 years old on their own".

At a hearing held at the hospital on 26 November, the court ordered that she be kept in forced psychiatric detention for another month, subject to review. It was reported that Nafosat Olloshkurova - whose health was good before she was detained - looked weak and ill, and that she complained that an increase in the dosage of her prescribed medication was making her sick.

In light of the above, I urge you to:

- Give your immediate attention to the case of Nafosat Olloshkurova and task the Prosecutor General's Office to ensure that she is released immediately as she is being detained to prevent her from carrying out her legitimate human rights work;
- Ensure that Nafosat Olloshkurova is not subjected to any forced treatment and that she has access to adequate and necessary health care that is of good quality while in detention, based on her informed consent.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Nafosat Olloshkurova is a human rights defender who has been raising awareness of human rights violations and expressed views critical of the authorities through her Facebook page, under the pen name of Shabnam Olloshkurova.

On 22 September, she joined a peaceful march from Khorezm to Tashkent and was detained by police the following day for taking part in an “unauthorized” demonstration. She had been covering the march on Facebook, posting interviews with the participants, police and local government officials who tried to stop the march. She was filming the police’s intervention when they detained and beat her.

Nafosat Olloshkurova was sentenced to 10 days’ administrative detention in contravention of Article 29 of the Code on Administrative Responsibility that stipulates that mothers of children younger than three years old and single parents or guardians of children up to 14 years old cannot be placed in administrative detention. On 26 September, Nafosat Olloshkurova was forcibly placed in a psychiatric hospital in Urgench, western Uzbekistan, after a police officer claimed she had “attempted suicide”. On 30 September, the administrative court of Urgench approved the Prosecutor Office’s request to transfer her to a psychiatric hospital for two months. On 28 November, the court decided to extend her detention in the psychiatric hospital by another month until 27 December. The court will then review this detention again. Nafosat Olloshkurova has only been given sporadic access to a lawyer of her choice, and her family have not been able to conduct private visits with her. Her brother and mother have been allowed to see her briefly on the ward, but always in the presence of police officers, medical staff, court or government officials.

Nafosat Olloshkurova is a single mother and her two young children are currently staying with her parents. Nafosat Olloshkurova’s family is gravely concerned about her physical, emotional and mental wellbeing.

The Uzbekistani authorities have in the past imposed forcible confinement in a psychiatric hospital on human rights defenders and journalists. Human rights defender Elena Urlaeva has been repeatedly detained over the last two decades by forced transfer to a psychiatric hospital to prevent her from conducting her monitoring activities. In January 2019, Nafosat Olloshkurova was detained by police while filming a peaceful protest by five women outside the Senate building in Tashkent. The women called for a meeting with President Mirziyoyev. She was charged with hooliganism and sentenced to five days’ administrative detention.

On 6 December, following their review of Uzbekistan’s fifth periodic report, the UN Committee against Torture noted in their Concluding Observations, that it had received allegations about “human rights defenders and journalists being involuntarily committed to psychiatric hospitals in order to prevent them from conducting their work, including Elena Urlaeva in March 2017 and Nafosat Olloshkurova in September 2019”.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English, Russian, Uzbek.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 22 January 2019

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Nafosat Olloshkurova (she/her)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/EUR62/1286/2019/en/>