

FAMILIES STAND AGAINST TORTURE

These pictures tell the courageous stories of different families in Central Asia who have lost their loved ones to torture, injustice or an unfair trial. They had to turn into activists overnight and hope that one day justice will prevail. They are ceaselessly fighting for investigations into these abuses and to get their men back home.

In Central Asia, many men and some women are locked up by law enforcement officials, held incommunicado and forced to write false confessions. Sometimes people are held in detention and threatened with more beatings until their families can afford to pay the police for their release.

There are too many cases of people dying in custody. While in detention, people may face torture and other ill-treatment and can be left with long-term physical and psychological injuries or end up in prison after an unfair trial. Even when signs of torture are clearly visible at trial, too often judges lack the independence or courage to order investigations into the detainee's allegations of torture.

Many of the families put their faith in their local criminal justice system and appealed against their treatment. However, some face harassment by the authorities for speaking out. They are also left without bread-winners and the children without their fathers.

Amnesty International is proud to join NGOs in the region showing their support for the individuals and their families portrayed in this exhibition and grateful to Nargis Hamrabaeva and the Bureau on Human Rights in Tajikistan for their help compiling the exhibition. You can show solidarity with the women and men's fight against torture by adding your signature to an international petition calling on the authorities in Central Asia to end impunity for torture and other ill-treatment and ensure victims of torture and their families are able to live without fear of reprisal for speaking out.

www.amnesty.org/en/appeals-for-action/kazakhstan



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Lubat Burhanova (left) is campaigning for her son Dilshodbek Murodov, Dushanbe (below right), Tajikistan.



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On 9 August 2009, Lubat Burhanova was told that her son had died in prison the day before, apparently of heart failure. His body was returned to her for burial. She lifted the shroud, and saw he had been severely beaten.

Lubat Burhanova appealed to the President of Tajikistan demanding that a criminal investigation be opened into her son's death and those responsible be brought to justice. A criminal investigation was opened by the General Prosecutor, but in 2013 she is still waiting for justice, and has written to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

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The family of Hamzali Ikromzoda campaign for justice, near Dushanbe, Tajikistan.



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The death of 27-year-old Hamzali Ikromzoda (above) in detention was widely reported in Tajikistan. Hamzali's relatives are convinced he was a victim of torture and other abuse.

The official medical report states that the burns on Hamzali Ikromzoda's body were caused by first aid and his chest injuries were due to attempts to save him. The forensic experts stated that it was a self-inflicted death by hanging.

Hamzali Ikromzoda's brother, Amirali, said his elderly parents (left) still haven't recovered from the blow of losing their son. He said that from an early age his brother had always defended anyone who had been wronged. "Hamzali would give his soul for justice."



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Abdusalim Shermatov (left), a sports trainer in Khojai-Alo, Tajikistan, has been campaigning on behalf of his son Nasim Salimzoda (below) and four of his neighbours who were reportedly subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including burning with cigarettes, electric shocks, dog bites and beatings, when detained in September 2011.



Parents and neighbours of the five young men in the village of Khojai-Alo sent an open letter to the news agency Asia Plus expressing their support.

Several other witnesses involved in the case have left the country, fearing reprisals for testifying in support of the young men.

Despite harassment by the authorities, Nasim's family and supporters continue to fight for justice.

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Zarina Najmutdinova (left) is fighting against injustice after her husband Ilhom Ismonov (below) was tortured, Sughd Region, Tajikistan.



It has been a long struggle since he was convicted after an unfair trial in 2010. Zarina is convinced that all accusations against her husband are trumped up and without proof. Following his appeal, the Supreme Court shortened his sentence but he still had two years left to serve. She now lives from one visit to the next.

“There is not an iota of truth in the accusations against my husband. They made him incriminate himself under horrendous torture. It’s like the proverb: ‘You can’t make an omelette without breaking a few eggs.’ And my husband Ilhom Ismonov ended up being one of those eggs.”

In May 2013 the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention called for Ilhom Ismonov to be immediately released and awarded adequate compensation.

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Saodat Kulieva (left), the mother of Khurshed Bobokalonov (below), has been trying to ensure that the men she refers to as “executioners in uniform” are brought to justice for the death of her son.



On 27 June 2009, Khurshed Bobokalonov, a gifted and promising young oncologist, was picked up by the police on his birthday in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, beaten with truncheons and died in a police car on the way to a police station.

Those responsible for Khurshed's death have yet to be identified. Saodat Kulieva has been petitioning the General Prosecutor's Office for a full and independent investigation: “False witness statements have been passed off as truth. Steps were taken to cover up facts and circumstances of my son's death.”

She ends: “Kurshed's two children can always be proud of their father.”



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Savriniso Gulova (below right) keeps up her struggle to get some justice for the death of her husband Ismoil Bachajonov (below left), who died in a detention facility in Dushanbe in January 2011.



When Ismoil's body was brought home for burial, she saw he was covered in dark blue bruises. A rare criminal investigation was opened into the case and in September 2011 two officials were sentenced to eight years' imprisonment for the deliberate infliction of grievous bodily harm resulting in death. A third defendant was found guilty of negligence but his three-year sentence was revoked under an amnesty.

Savriniso had to appeal to the court for compensation for the death of her husband, the only breadwinner in the family. She received less than US\$6,000 in an out of court settlement.

These days Savriniso has to be both dad and mum to their children (main image). She finds comfort in her oldest son's words: "Don't worry, Mum, when I grow up I will look after you and my little brother and sister. We'll be fine."

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Khadicha Askarova (left) is still campaigning for her husband, Azimjan Askarov (below), a prominent human rights defender, artist, and a prisoner of conscience in Kyrgyzstan. Azimjan Askarov was sentenced after unfair trial to life imprisonment in September 2010.



Khadicha Askarova uses all available sources to raise awareness of injustice that her family has suffered. In March 2013, Khadicha issued an open letter that was addressed to the foreign embassies, international organizations, regional human rights organizations and journalists. Khadicha says that her husband was unjustly imprisoned and he is now sentenced to slow death in prison.

“I am earnestly asking you to help my husband, the father of four children and the grandfather of eight grandchildren.”



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Fatima Ismagulova (left) and Mariya Suleimenova, aunts of Zhasulan Suleimenov (below) and Kuat Zhubolaev, are ardent fighters for justice from Astana, Kazakhstan.



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The young men were sentenced to eight years' imprisonment for plotting a terrorist attack.

Zhasulan's and Kuat's complaints of torture and other ill-treatment were never investigated. Both men are now in poor health in prison, Kuat is losing his sight and wheelchair user Zhasulan has spent up to 11 months in solitary confinement and is suffering from bedsores.

The aunts write letters to prison officials, pleading with them to treat their boys humanely. They never raise their voice. Their only weapon is love, care, and gratitude. And it will break walls.

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Tatyana Shikhmuradova's (left) husband Boris Shikhmuradov (below), was subjected to enforced disappearance more than 10 years ago in Turkmenistan.



Since her husband's arrest, Tatyana Shikhmuradova has been writing constant letters to government officials, including the President. However, she has received no reply from the Turkmenistani authorities. "I have the right to know where my husband is, his medical condition and at the very least to know if he is still alive."

Tatyana Shikhmuradova is forced to live in exile. She is afraid that if she returns to Turkmenistan she would not be able to continue to write appeal letters to the authorities due to the severe restrictions on freedom of expression there. She would be at risk of being arrested.