

UA 77/01

Arbitrary detention/fear for safety/fear of torture

30 March

UZBEKISTAN Rahima AKHMADALIEVA ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) (f), aged 39  
Odina MAKHSUDOVA ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) (f), aged 19, her daughter

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Rahima Akhmadalievna has been held in a basement cell at the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) in the capital, Tashkent, since 17 March, allegedly to force her husband to surrender to police. She reportedly has heart problems for which she needs regular medication, which she has been denied.

MVD officers detained her after searching her family's Tashkent home without a warrant. They wanted to question her about the whereabouts of her husband, Ruhiddin Fahrudinov, an independent *imam*, who is wanted on allegedly fabricated charges of "Wahhabism" (a fundamentalist branch of Islam).

On 20 March her 19-year-old daughter Odina Makhsudova came to look for her, and was also detained. She says that she and her mother were taken to a basement cell, where a group of officers threatened them and accused them of being "Wahhabis" and relatives of a criminal. Odina Makhsudova says her mother looked gaunt and appeared to have lost weight; she had allegedly been prevented from sleeping to force her to reveal her husband's whereabouts. Odina Makhsudova insists that her mother does not know where Ruhiddin Fahrudinov is.

The officers then forcibly removed the women's *hijabs* (headscarves worn by pious Muslim women). They forced Odina Makhsudova to promise that she would stop wearing a *hijab* and stop praying. They then took her to a corridor and made her watch guards dragging a man out of a cell and beating him with rubber truncheons. She says his feet were covered in bruises, he was unable to walk and his nose appeared to have been broken. The officers apparently insulted and swore at her, and said her mother would be sent to prison because she was the mother of "Wahhabis". They threatened to take her six-year-old sister and three-year-old brother to an orphanage to prevent them from becoming "Wahhabis". They reportedly also forced her to curse her mother to her face, threatening to torture her if she did not. She believes this was intended to put further pressure on her mother.

Odina Makhsudova was then released, on condition that she keep silent about what had happened, and help to find her father. For some days she was too frightened to speak, but she has now defied the MVD's orders and appealed for help, putting herself in great danger. She is the last person to have seen her mother.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The repression of perceived opponents of President Islam Karimov has increased alarmingly since a series of bomb explosions in Tashkent in February 1999. The government claimed the explosions were attempts by Islamic extremists to assassinate President Karimov. Amnesty International is concerned that the government are using the bombings as a pretext to clamp down on their perceived opponents. Hundreds of supposed conspirators, including members of independent Islamic congregations, members and supporters of the banned political opposition parties and movements and their families have been arrested on charges including terrorism, attempting to overthrow the constitutional order and seeking to establish an Islamist state.

Amnesty International has documented a number of cases where the authorities have detained people to force them to reveal where their relatives are. Shahzoda

Ergasheva, also the wife of an *imam*, was reportedly arrested in February 1999 and questioned about the whereabouts of her husband. When she was released after two weeks in custody she was reportedly unable to stand up, and had to be hospitalised.

Amnesty International regularly receives reports that people perceived as members of independent, non-registered Islamic congregations or followers of independent Islamic leaders have been tortured or ill-treated. Hundreds of these so-called "Wahhabis" have been sentenced to long terms of imprisonment after unfair trials. The authorities have persistently failed to investigate widespread allegations of torture and ill-treatment, leading to a perceived climate of impunity.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English, Russian, Uzbek, or your own language:**

- expressing concern at allegations that Rahima Akhmadalieva has been detained solely to force her husband to surrender, and, if so, urging the authorities to release her immediately and unconditionally;
- urging the authorities to order impartial investigations into allegations that Rahima Akhmadalieva and her daughter Odina Makhsudova suffered cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment at the Ministry of Internal Affairs;
- urging the authorities to ensure that Rahima Akhmadalieva receives appropriate medical treatment for her heart problems;
- urging the authorities to publish the results of the investigations and to bring those found responsible to justice.

**APPEALS TO:**

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**Salutation: Dear President**

Minister of Internal Affairs, Zakirzhan Almatovich ALMATOV  
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**Salutation: Dear Minister**

General Procurator, Rashidjon Hamidovich KODIROV  
 700047 g. Tashkent  
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**Salutation: Dear Procurator General**

**COPIES TO:**

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and to diplomatic representatives of Uzbekistan accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat,  
or your section office, if sending appeals after 11 May 2001.