

EU – Uzbekistan: Continue the pressure on Uzbek government in order to free all prisoners of conscience

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Press release

human rights uzbekistan

To:

European Council

European Parliament

European Commission

CC:

UN Commission on Human Rights; The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

OSCE

US Department of State; Senate; House of Representatives

The release of Umida Niazova demonstrates that the Uzbek authorities will yield to international pressure: the EU must act now to oblige the Uzbek authorities to free all prisoners of conscience.

Unprecedented international pressure on the Uzbek authorities (from the EU, the U.S. Department of State, OSCE, international organizations, and representatives of the international community) has forced the Uzbek authorities to soften last week's verdict against Umida Niazhova, mother of a 2-year old son, independent journalist, translator and human rights activist. The rapid overturning of the prison sentence means that, instead of spending the next 7 years behind bars, Umida can return to her family. However, for the following 3 years her civil rights are restricted; she will have to check in periodically with the law enforcement agency; will be forbidden to leave her house after 10 pm; and will be banned from traveling abroad.

Umida's friends, family and many supporters are relieved that she has escaped the harshness of the Uzbek prisons, where the systematic use of torture is well known. Yet Umida is still considered guilty on trumped up charges under the law on "contraband and distribution of anti-constitutional materials". This creates a precedent of charging anyone simply for reading human rights-related materials on the internet.

Our message to all involved in the Sanctions decision next Monday 14 May in the GAERC Council Conclusions is that the Uzbek government has not yet demonstrated sufficient readiness to a dialogue and progress achievement in the area of human rights to warrant the lifting of the Sanctions. To this day there are still human rights activists, journalists and dissidents languishing in Uzbek jails. The Uzbek authorities must immediately free these people, without coercing them for confessions and any other forms of humiliation of their human and civil dignities. Here is the list of prisoners of conscience, some of whom are dying due to repeated torture in Uzbek jails:

1. Gulbahor Turaeva (was refused in the choice of a lawyer and visitations by relatives; in 'response' to Germany's call for her release the sentence has just been increased from 6 years to 11 years and 8 months)
2. Mutabar Tadjibaeva (is in a critical health condition due to repeated torture; relatives are not allowed to see her)
3. Saidjahon Zainobiddinov (relatives are not allowed to see him)
4. Muhammad Behjanov (close to death due to repeated use of torture)

- 5.Ihtiyor Hamraev (imprisoned due to the human rights activism of his father, Bahtiyor Hamraev)
- 6.Murod Djuraev (close to death due to repeated use of torture)
- 7.Djamshid Karimov (forcefully kept in a psychiatric ward)
- 8.Abduvahid Abduvahabov
- 9.Habibilla Akpulatov
- 10.Rashid Begjanov
- 11.Azam Farmonov
- 12.Ruhitdin Fehrudinov
- 13.Isroiljon Holdarov
- 14.Norboy Holjigitov
- 15.Abdurasul Hudoiazarov
- 16.Abdinazar Hujanazarov
- 17.Nasim Isakov
- 18.Sattor Irzaev
- 19.Alisher Karomatov
- 20.Bahodir Kambarov
- 21.Ulugbek Kattabekov
- 22.Djamol Kutiev
- 23.Mamadali Mahmudov
- 24.Dilmurod Muhiddinov
- 25.Mamarajab Nazarov
- 26.Toxtomurod Toshev
- 27.Buriboi Toshpulatov
- 28.Rustam Usmanov
- 29.Sanjar Umarov
- 30.Ahmadjon Adilov (has been in prison for 23 years)

In addition, without any court decision, the following individuals, as well as many others, are prohibited from leaving the country:

Alo Hodjaev (just has been denied the exit permit for attending seminar in Germany)

Agzam Turgunov

Elena Urlaeva

Ahtam Shaimardanov

The decision to soften the judgment against Umida has demonstrated Uzbek government's sensitiveness in respect to sanctions that were imposed by the European Union in 2005. It is not accidental that this court ruling is falling around the same time as the European Council's decision on the fate of sanctions. This means that sanctions can be an effective measure against cruel

regimes and, therefore, the European Union, as well as other international institutions, must keep using this instrument in their human rights agenda

We continue to call on the government of Uzbekistan, to stop the machine of repressions and torture, cooperate fully with the EU and other international actors in a results-oriented dialogue on human rights, and free judiciary from the dictatorship of the executive power.

Recommendations to the European Council:

1.Continue sanctions towards the government of Uzbekistan, until it starts demonstrating genuine progress in the area of human rights.

2.Human rights must be at the forefront of the political strategy currently being developed by the German Presidency of the European Union towards the Central Asian region.

Signatures (name, contact info) should be sent to: asiecentrale@neuf.fr

This petition will be forwarded to the officials of European Union.

Current signatures:

Nadejda Ataeva, President of the Association for Human Rights in Central Asia, Paris, France,

Anvar Usmanov, independent journalist, Munich, Germany

Yodgor Obid, Uzbek literati, Graz, Austria

Quinn Martin, Uzbekistan Initiative in the USA, New York, USA

Alisher Ilkhamov, researcher and associate scholar, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, London, UK

Кудрат Бабаджанов, Группа за Свободу Прессы Узбекистана, Тимро, Швеция

Nigina Malikova, Representative of the Association for Human Rights in Central Asia, Arlington, VA, USA

Alexei Tolkachev, Chairman of the International Democratic Initiative 'Pomaranch', Kiev, Ukraine,

Bakhodir Isamuhamedov, Chair of the Project 'Mahalla' for supporting neighbourhood communities, Stockholm, Sweden

Bernhard Clasen, co-Chairman, International Group for Release of the Captives and Missing in the Karabakh Conflict Zone. Moenchengladbach, Germany

Nadiejda Boytchenko, Representative of the Association for Human Rights in Central Asia, Namur, Belgium